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By

Jessie Lee Huffstutler



Early Memories Of Chester, Illinois



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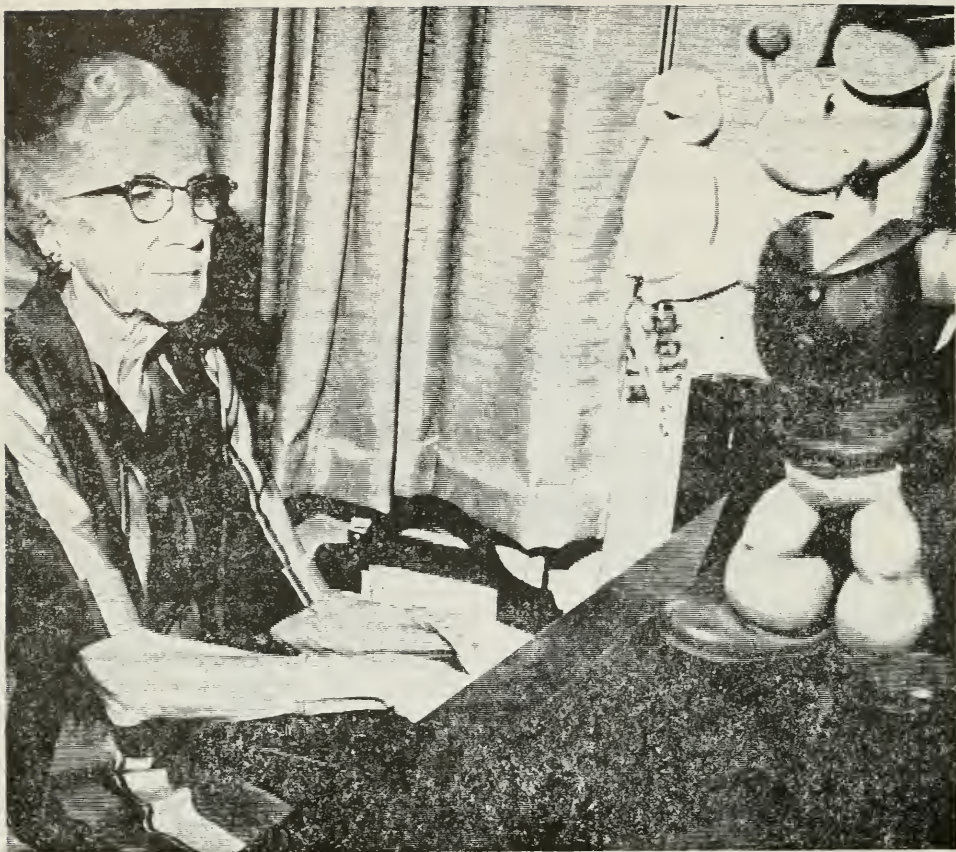
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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

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Mrs. Jessie Lee Huffstutler, retired teacher and musician, reminisces about Elzie Segar, creator of the cartoon strip "Popeye," as she looks at a replica of "Popeye" on her piano. Mrs. Huffstutler taught school in Dowell from 1943 to 1945 and in Du Quoin from 1945 to 1955, when she retired. She also taught music to area young people and to prisoners at Menard Penitentiary for 17 years. Besides playing piano for films and slide shows at the Chester Opera House, she played at non-denominational services at the prison.

FOREWORD

The following stories, written by me in 1969 and 1970, are the result of a mental walk which I took through the streets of Chester, stopping often to recall memories of people, dates, and events. They were published, as a series, in the Randolph County Herald Tribune at that time.

I received much help from people as I traveled and for this I am very grateful. I'm sure some omissions and discrepancies occur, due to the many sources of research.

I wish to dedicate this booklet to my good friend and physician, Dr. John R. Beck, Chester, Illinois, because he not only prescribed this project for me, but encouraged me along the way.

Jessie Lee Huffstutler

Age 88 Years

Born in Chester, Illinois, February 2, 1888.

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Main Entrance to Penitentiary, Chester, Illinois – 1912

1.

“In early June 1905, shortly after my graduation from high school in May, I received an appointment by Warden J. B. Smith of the Southern Illinois Penitentiary at Menard, to a position there in the Music Department and was asked to report for the chapel service on the following Sunday morning. Ruth Brinkmann, who held the position, was soon to be married and asked to be relieved as early as possible.

I was 17 years old and wondered just how I would feel facing several men whom I hoped to please and win their approval. With much concern I met my choir of prisoners before service and with the Chaplain, chose the hymns to be used in the service. This service was non-denominational. Soon the guards, whose seats were on elevations along the sides of the Chapel, took their places, the band began to play and doors opened from both sides. As the men filed in I had mixed emotions, seeing some so young and others so old. When the Chaplain arose to begin the service, I had myself under control and when time came for special music, I sang “The Holy City” and



State Hospital For Criminal Insane, Chester, Illinois until 1975

from the applause I received, I knew they were now my friends and from that time, I was 'Miss Jessie' to them. Immediately following this service the Chaplain and I left through the back hall door, went through the prison yard and up to Security Hospital for service there which was held in the dining room.

Between 1905 and 1929 I broke my parole three times, each time to return, since this position was appointive by the Warden. In 1929 my son Fred was ready for college. I resigned and we both went to McKendree College at Lebanon, he as a student and I to become House Mother in the Boys' Dormitory and also to take some courses.

In 1905 the prison band consisted of strings, wind instruments, percussion and piano, conducted by a fellow prisoner. This was soon changed with the appointment of David Munal of Murphysboro, an old time band man, as director. He continued also to have a small orchestra which included the piano. This I enjoyed very much. We played for many occasions including the first movies shown there on Saturday afternoons, and also for the school graduation exercises for men who had completed the eighth grade, with special recognition given to those who had completed the third grade and now were able to read and write.

I held choir rehearsal twice a week and during my seventeen years there, many good musicians came and went. At one time one choir member played my solo accompaniments. At another time one man with a beautiful voice, good musical background and much singing experience, stayed several years. We sang together often and I did enjoy him so much because he was able to harmonize on most any type of song. I've often wondered what became of him. I had hoped he would do something with his musical ability.

Another enjoyable experience was singing in a mixed quartet composed of Warden Smith's wife, alto, who missed her dinner many times to rehearse. Our bass was the prison florist, an employee with a wonderful voice. The excellent tenor was a prisoner who was the librarian.

Once each month services were held for the Lutheran and Catholic men, the minister and priest coming from town, bringing their own accompanist. For one year I played the Catholic Mass. They had their own small chapel and a choir of Catholic men who were very helpful until I learned their Order of Service.

Warden Smith and his wife were very hospitable and entertained much. She especially loved to dance. The dances were held in the main hall just behind the double front gate, with the Prison Band seated in the left wing to furnish the music. Usually they were held on short notice by calling a few friends uptown, asking them to pass the word along. Sparta friends were also called and the Illinois Southern sent a special car for the occasion.

Mrs. Smith and a few of the older folk wanted to dance a quadrille one evening but few of the younger set knew what it was all about and there was no one to call the dance. Mrs. Smith made some secret plans before the next event and on that evening, to my surprise, my mother and brother Otto appeared in the midst of the activities. A quadrille was soon formed with my brother calling the dances and for a short while, the younger set had a rest period. Fortunately I was included in the dance, having been taught by my mother.

The Deputy Warden's home was a large two story frame house located on this side of the prison at the foot of the hill just below the Security Hospital. Previously a layer of soapstone had caused several slides along the river front, and one morning the Deputy Warden's family awakened to find the back of their house had slid into the front quarters. A new home was soon built near the green house where the present cottages now stand.

Deputy Dowell was at the institution many years and was a very successful deputy. Often at night he would enter the yard by one of the outside gates and quietly inspect the premises. When he entered a building where workmen were, they had a code by which to inform other workers of his presence. This code was several taps on an iron pipe. But they didn't fool Deputy Dowell very long. He had control of his men, but they had great respect for him. He was hard, firm and very fair with them. When he had occasion to call a man on the carpet and found him to be guilty, he quietly said, "Out the back door, Johnnie." They all knew just what that meant.

Many years later, about 1927 when F. R. Wolfle was Warden, he and his wife were members of our Methodist Church choir. At Christmas time we were sending groups out on Christmas Eve to carol in different parts of the town—each youth group accompanied by an adult. We then returned to the church at 10:30 p.m. for refreshments. Then, according to the Warden's wishes, the entire group set out for the prison at 11:30 p.m. and at exactly midnight, we entered the cell block, singing as we proceeded. Some dissenting voices could be heard at first. Then someone discovered I was in the group and my name was quickly passed down the line and all became quiet as they listened with respect and later thanked us. We went into the yards that night also, over to the hospital and sang for the sick. This was a memorial night for all of us and not soon to be forgotten. I don't suppose this had ever happened before and I know it hasn't since.

I have many pleasant memories of my seventeen years of work and associations at the prison. They were rewarding years. I worked under Wardens J. B. Smith, W. V. Choisser, J. A. White, F. R. Wolflee, and again under J. A. White, resigning in the fall of 1929.



Chester Bridge



Train load of flour shipped by Gilster Mill — 1926

2. I remember two railroad depots at Menard, the Illinois Southern near the river was a two-story brick building with living quarters above for the Agent and his family. The Wabash Depot was near the south prison gate through which the railroad cars switched to carry freight and food inside the prison yard. Roscoe Morse while agent there, was shot and killed while on duty.

It was at this railroad crossing of the prison road that Father Eckert's car was hit by a train. He was seriously injured, living only a few days. He died on Nov. 24, 1925, and had been priest of St. Mary's Church in Chester many years.

The Illinois Southern Railroad, later called the Missouri and Illinois, reached Chester about 1901. It started at Salem, came downstate, crossed the river at Ste. Genevieve on a transfer boat and then went into Bismark, Mo., which was the end of the line. A branch line came from Collins (near Modoc) to Chester by way of Riley's Lake and Fort Gage.

Many of the prison employees and their families lived along this prison road, and I remember some of the old timers. Mrs. John Hem had her own Art Studios, teaching china, oil and water colors. She had many students, and some of their masterpieces still grace the walls and china cabinets in many Chester homes. Mr. Hem was a stone mason and head of that department at the prison.

Henry Jutze, who was a stone mason and brick layer who worked on the prison wall, and his family came next. I remember son Joe when he came to me for piano lessons. Two small duplex units were near, one in which I was born Feb. 2, 1888. Then came the Adam Gnaegy family with children Leeman, Adam and Gertrude. All of the children down there walked the hill to church and school. Mr. Gnaegy was also a brick layer.

There was also a lumber yard owned by Nick Beare and Joe Chadwick. The ice plant was most important, because all of our ice was made there and sold out to dealers. These dealers had drivers who drove one-horse wagons with scales attached to the back on one side and a driver to haul it over town for sale. We placed our ice card in the window to let the driver know the sized piece our ice box needed. All of the children in the neighborhood followed the wagon for blocks, hoping a few chips would fall in the wagon and they could have it to cool their parched throats.

Then came the Chester Illinois Southern Depot with its "Turn Table" which never ceased to be of interest to children and adults as the engine was turned around ready for its next run.

Across the street from the depot on the corner of Water Street stood the Old Rock House with store building below. This was always a very interesting place to go. Mrs. Abby Francis, a Civil War character who slept by day and travelled by night, lived on the upper floor with her daughter, Mrs. Ballard, and her many grandchildren. I remember Sally best. Many Sunday afternoons we spent there, and occasionally a special privilege was granted to us—that of opening a huge Chest that held gorgeous gowns of silk, brocade, satin and velvet. We were permitted to choose one, put it on, and for a while, imagine we were in the presence of Royalty. We always wondered just which relative had been a member of a Royal Family, but we never did get the answer.

The business houses from the Rock House in that block were the Morrison harness and buggy factory which also had a livery stable with horses and buggies for hire; the Jacob Gnaegy Saloon which had in its quarters a large ice house insulated with saw dust and whatever else was used at that time. Large blocks of ice would be cut from the river in winter and stored, to supply the saloon in the summer time, before we had our own ice plant here.

Ed Gnaegy had a barber shop, and then came the Cochran boarding house on the corner at the foot of the Chester Steps. In this boarding house most of the men from the Iron Mountain Railroad Offices, which were across the street near the river, lived. There was a daughter Lottie Cochran who later married one of the Lashleys, some of them well-known attorneys in St. Louis.



Bottom of city steps straight up the hill to the top at the McAdams Home, near the Court House. Steps near the top are made of wood.



"Cap" Boone

A short distance up the City Steps was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Nick Beare, father of Art Beare and Jessie Beare Colbert. There was also the home of Mr. and Mrs Joe Chadwick and their daughter Georgia. Then came the Paulton home. I remember the daughter Alice. A little farther up the steps was the Amzi Segar home with the son Elzie.

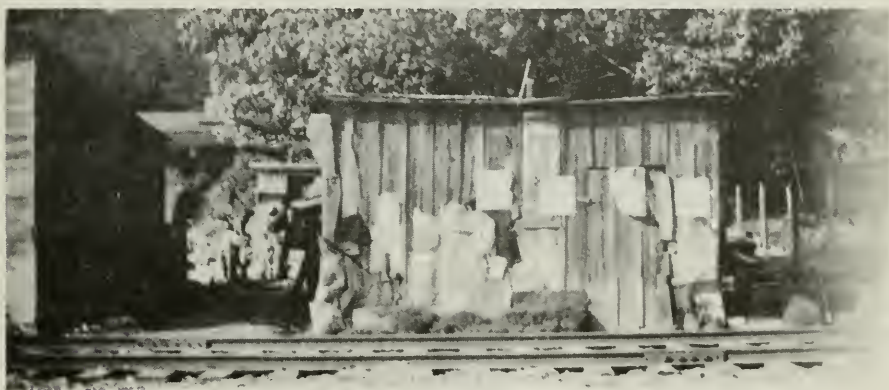
Returning again to Water Street, in the next block was the Frank Kennedy grocery store, a feed store with John Hughes as proprietor and Warf Master, the Hannah Meher General Dry Goods, John Devine Saloon,

Sugerman's Clothing, Kolp Saloon, Top's Bakery, and Frank Gollon's Saloon where fresh oysters were brought by boat from St. Louis and were served along with other foods. I have an old newspaper clipping that says "Mr. Frank Gollon's advertisement had a picture of a big fat man, indicating that they fed exceptionally well at Gollon's." Most saloons, I am told, served food at that time, and if a housewife was short of bread, she could usually buy a loaf at one of the saloons.

Across the street were a general store, Iron Mountain Offices and depot—a two-story building with Vena Devine and her husband living above. These were all rock buildings with warehouses behind, near the river.

Moving up the hill a short block was the St. Louis Flats, first owned by a Beare, then one of the Schucherts in which Mr. Lillman had a bakery on the lower floor with living quarters and rental rooms above. That building is now the Landmark Inn.

The Cliff House was one of the leading hotels in the old steam boat days and was owned and operated by Mrs. Meher and her daughter Alice who also carried the mail in lower Chester. This building now is arranged for two apartments and is owned by Mrs. Emma Darwin White. Across the street was the Bush Meat Market with Fritze and his mother and father. They butchered most of their own meat at that time. A short distance down the street was the offices of Dr. Steele in early times.



"Cap" Boone Home



Gollon wine and liquor
company about 1864.

"We are now back on Water Street at the corner of Joe Gnaegy's Saloon with living quarters above where Tillie presided. Next came the Born Grocery with Oscar and William—formerly Ochs and Born. The Tackenburg Drugstore was a much newer building with apartments above. There was Mr. and Mrs. Tackenburg and her brother, Lynn Cashion, who was single, good looking, although pleasingly plump, and a good dancer. He was the pride of all the girls who were fortunate enough to have his name on their dance programs. Mrs. Tackenburg was more than pleasingly plump, but the life of any party she ever attended, with her wit and talent for poetry.

Next to this was the Cotton apartment and rooming house. Beside this was a small building owned by the Unie and Kate Roberts family. An old newspaper clipping I once had said it was owned by them and was the first bank in Chester. This adjoined the St. James Hotel, and I remember it being used as a barber shop.



St. James Hotel, Tackenburg Drug Store and Apartment Building

The St. James Hotel was owned and operated by Mrs. Kate Thompson. It was also very popular during the Steamboat Days. Most Drummers and traveling men had their "trunk showings" there.

Below the St. James Hotel were several coal yards and ice offices. Clyde Barnard operated one and Paul Gorsuch, the other. Then Mr. McCloud and son Bud had just an ice office, with Bud the driver of the wagon. Bud didn't mind driving the wagon because he had access to it in the evening for other purposes. He would dry the wagon floor, cover it with straw, hitch old Dobbin, and then proceed to load boys and girls from the lower part of town and all go to the skating rink at the Opera House for the evening. Old Dobbin would patiently wait while they had their fun, although he knew he would be late going to bed. There may have been other ice dealers, but I remember Wilsey Hurley as being one of the last to deliver ice to the home. He sold his business in 1944 after 34 years of delivering ice himself from his own wagon.

I'm told the first knitting mill was started in this area by C. B. Cole near the Milling Company with son-in-law Percy Withers as Superintendent. About 1913 this knitting mill was sold to Joshua Richman where

he stayed for awhile, then built the new mill in Buena Vista and moved there. It was located at the northwest corner of Stacey and Swanwick Streets where the old Lukin Hotel had been for many years.

Next came the Cooper Shop where staves were made for the barrels used by Cole Milling Company for shipment of their flour.

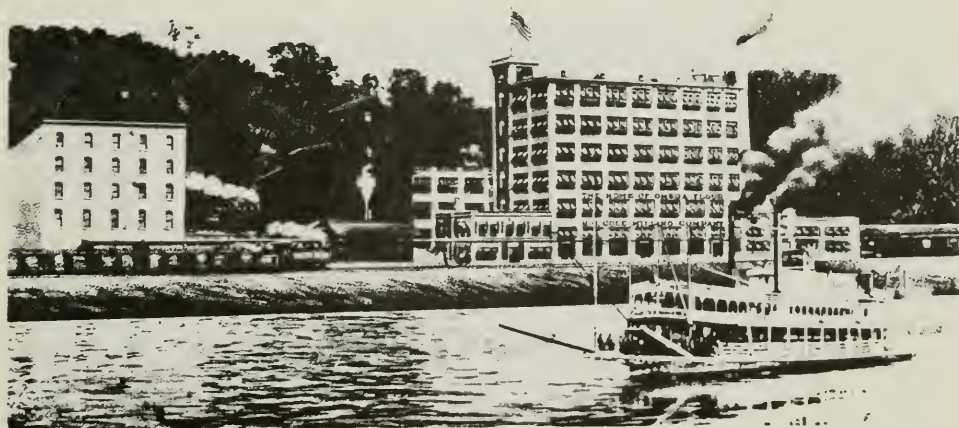
The Wabash Chester and Western Railroad, depot and round-house held a prominent place in Chester history which I will discuss later.

A very interesting story of this area is the building of the incline, beginning at the railroad about 50 feet above the St. James Hotel and extending to the river's edge. Al Gnaegy was the engineer and used it for the switch engine. Filled coal cars were brought from the coal fields and the switch engine placed them on barges at the river's edge for shipment. Passenger cars were also transferred to the Missouri side, making connections there with another train.

The Yourtee Sand Company also used this incline in their business, taking empty cars on barges out into the middle of the river so as to be able to pump the sand directly into the cars, then returned to the switch engine and placed on the railroad track, returning with empties on the return trip. When Yourtees moved this business south, William Brown with his own equipment continued the sand business here until his death. Now his son Spencer carries on the business.

Another interesting story of this area was the building of the Pentecostal Church by our good old friend, the Rev. Larry Dauer. He gave the money for the building, furnished it, became the minister, and paid all of the bills. "Larry" as we all knew him, was the town plumber and used his money for the glory of God. Wherever he went to work, he talked about what God had done for him. He was a real witness for his Lord and never failed to extend an invitation to attend his services. My husband, son and I went one night and were ushered almost to the front seat. It was a very spiritual service, good music with rhythm, good sermon, and many went to the altar for prayer. This all was a new experience for us, but we were glad for having gone. I taught Larry's wife to play the hymns so she could be of help to him by using the organ. The Rev. Larry Dauer was a "great man."

Mr. Gausman had a blacksmith shop near the church and Philip Gnaegy, the saloon.



H. C. Cole Milling Co. The Home of "Omega" Flour, Chester, Illinois, on the Mississippi River.

The Cole Milling Company is really a landmark, established in 1839 with 130 years of service to the community as well as elsewhere. It is still owned by some members of the Cole family. I remember C. B. Cole and his family. Their beautiful frame home still stands high on the hill above the mill and still belongs to some of the Cole family. It has been vacant for some time.

The home of Harry Cole stands farther back on the hill. It is made of sand stone with a spacious yard, shrubs and trees. It was always occupied by a Cole until a few years ago when it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Bill Koeneman. Extensive refurbishing to the inside has been done by them.

As one sits on the river front and gazes up over the hillside, many large beautiful homes as well as cottages, dot the hillside with their many colors of paint. At night when the places are lighted, it really is a sight to behold—as if the fireflies had all been turned loose and lighted at the same time.

I do not know the people who live in the cottages dotting this hillside, but they add much to the beauty of the picture I wish I were able to paint. As I walk down the river front and gaze toward them, I see these homes—Mrs. Cole Cleiman, Doc Cleiman's now owned by the Russell McConkeys, the old Harry Neville mansion later owned by Nick Beare who left it to his daughter, Jessie Beare Colbert and her son Dan. I'm told this house has recently been bought by someone who restored the outside with shingles and brought back some of its former elegance in appearance with its many domes. There are also the homes of Mrs. Robert Grah, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Gorsuch, the William Cohen residence, now Bud's home. The old rock Presbyterian Church is now used as a residence. There are also the homes of the Bill Schucherts and Elzie Segar's on the steps, Frank Kennedy's home, Mrs. Gail Roberts, Dr. B. E. Gilster's, formerly the Pinkerton home, John and Mattie Nisbet's old home now owned by Homer Lochhead, Bud Yourtee's home now owned by Mr. Mizel Stevens, Mrs. John Gilster's home and that of Agnes Kuhrtz now owned by Clara Howie, and the First Christian Church.

Most of these homes face the long Chester Hill Road which I soon will be climbing.



View from ferry boat, Chester, Illinois

"The oldest segment of what now is the Missouri-Pacific Lines in Illinois was completed in March, 1872, by the Chester and Tamaroa Coal and Railroad Company which had been chartered March 4, 1869, under the General Railroad laws of Illinois. This section was 40 miles in length and extended from Chester on the east bank of the Mississippi River to Tamaroa. This was the first train in Randolph County. The company secured subscriptions to its capital stock from Perry and Randolph Counties for which stock interest bearing bonds were issued. The last bonds were to mature in 1892 with 7 per cent interest paid promptly.

In 1873 the Chester and Tamaroa Coal and Railroad Company, by consolidation, became a part of the Iron Mountain, Chester and Eastern Railroad which was chartered on July 24 of that year. the road passed into the hands of a Receiver and was for many years the subject of lively litigation. A sale of the road took place Feb. 28, 1878, under foreclosure in the United States Court, and H. C. Cole became the purchaser.

A company was organized Feb. 20, 1878, as the Wabash, Chester and Western Railroad Company and began operating the road April 1, 1878. W. G. Barnard of Bellaire, Ohio, was president and Charles B. Cole of Chester was treasurer and general manager.

The management leased the road to the St. Louis Coal Railroad Company on March 25, 1882, for 45 years. The main line from Tamaroa to Chester was 40.83 miles; branch from Chester to the penitentiary, 1.43 miles; sidings on the main line, 2.88 miles; aggregate length of all tracks, 45.14 miles.

William Bryden, father of Margaret Bryden, came to Chester in 1885 to work for the Wabash and was the first operator, then agent, and later, superintendent until 1925 when he retired. He died two years later. Al Conder was the conductor, E. C. Prowell, the engineer, with Bose Davis as the baggage master. Other employees whose names are familiar to us are Charles Robertson and Red Faverty. There are many more, but my memory fails me here.

A story is told of Bud Bryden, son of the superintendent, having a pair of goats and a wagon which he drove over town. One time when the tracks of other railroads were under water, Bud put a sign on his wagon reading "Wabash, the Old Reliable" and drove it through town. This pleased Mr. Cole so much that he called the train "Old Reliable."

The Tamaroa and Mount Vernon Railroad Company was chartered in September, 1891, and in 1892 completed the 21 miles of railroad from Tamaroa to Mount Vernon. Almost simultaneously with the completion, the Tamaroa and Mount Vernon was absorbed by the Wabash, Chester and Western. Like so many railroads of that time, the name did not exactly fit the objectives of the company. The W C & W was built to serve the coal mines between the Mississippi River and Mount Vernon, and there was no intention on the part of the company officials to extend the line eastward to the Wabash River or westward across the Mississippi.

Subsequently the W C & W went into receivership, operated until Sept. 7, 1927 and was sold at foreclosure. Three days later title to the property was taken the name of Chester and Mount Vernon Railroad Company which was incorporated Sept. 10, 1927, for the express purpose of

taking over the defunct W C & W. All stock in the C & M V is owned by Missouri-Pacific and the road extending 63.27 miles with 24.67 miles of siding from Menard to Mount Vernon is operated as an integral part of the Missouri-Pacific.

There is another important unit of the Missouri-Pacific lines which has a part of its operation in Southern Illinois—the Missouri-Illinois Railroad which has 109.95 miles of track in the region extending from Salem on the east to Kellog. A car ferry operates to connect the Illinois portion of the M. I. with the portion in Missouri, the west bank terminus being Thomure, about two miles north of Ste. Genevieve.

Missouri-Pacific owns a controlling stock interest in the Missouri-Illinois and although general and divisional officers of Missouri-Pacific have jurisdiction over the M-I, it is operated as a separate unit of Missouri-Pacific lines.

The Missouri-Illinois is essentially a bridge line in Illinois, connecting at Salem with the Baltimore and Ohio; and the Chicago and Eastern Illinois; at Centralia with the Illinois Central, Chicago, Burlington and Quincy and Southern Railroad; at Nashville with the Louisville and Nashville; at Coulterville with the Illinois Central; at Sparta with the Illinois Division of the Missouri-Pacific. It provides a by-pass around the St. Louis terminal area, especially on freight moving from and to the east and southwest.

The company was originally called the Centralia and Chester Railroad and later the portion of line in Illinois was known as the Illinois Southern, this name being adopted following a receivership. The company was again incorporated Jan. 8, 1920, as the Missouri-Illinois. Another receivership followed and the road came near to abandonment but was acquired by Missouri-Pacific as of April 20, 1929. On that date control of the Missouri portion of the railroad—the Mississippi and Bonne Terre Railroad—passed to the Missouri-Illinois by stock purchase and operating control was obtained by a lease running for 99 years from Jan. 1, 1929. At the same time Missouri-Pacific purchased 51 per cent of the stock of the Missouri-Illinois and brought the road into the Missouri-Pacific lines operation.

There is a two-mile gap in the Illinois part of the Missouri-Illinois at Centralia, but since 1896 the M-I has held trackage rights over the main lines of the Illinois Central from the M-I junction to Branch Junction, the entire two miles being within the limits of or immediately adjacent to the city of Centralia. In recent years there has been an active oil play from Centralia eastward to Salem and much of this oil property has been and is owned by the railroad.

The Missouri-Illinois operates in five counties in Southern Illinois including Clinton, Marion, Perry, Randolph and Washington. In Randolph County there are 34.87 miles of main track, 15.85 miles of siding, for a total of 50.72 miles.

Joe Hertich came from Ste. Genevieve to Fort Gage with the Illinois Southern in 1905. In 1908 he married Ada Milligan and soon they were both working at Evansville, Centralia and Salem and again at Evansville before moving to Menard Station where they lived in an apartment above the depot until 1930 when they bought a home in Chester. The station burned in

1933 and the railroad company built a small building where Joe stayed until his retirement with 49 years of railroad service. Henry Menke was station master at the Chester station.

I wish to thank Rolin Baucom for the research done on the railroads. For many years he has been employed in the communications section of the Missouri-Pacific Engineering Department in the St. Louis office.

5.

"In 1898 when my brother Elmer Gant was in his third and last year of high school, the surveyors for the new Iron Mountain Railroad had reached Chester, and my brother left school to join them. He stayed with the company and eventually became a Civil Engineer.

"This main line of the Illinois Division of the Missouri-Pacific, extending from Valley Junction (the north end of Dupoy yard) to Thebes, a distance of 120.7 miles, was completed Nov. 1, 1903. It was built as a low level line to avoid handling freight trains over the Ozark hills traversed by the Missouri division between St. Louis and Poplar Bluff. Its construction was predicated upon construction of the Thebes bridge which is owned jointly by Missouri-Pacific (2/5), and Illinois Central, St. Louis, Southwestern and Chicago and Eastern Illinois (1/5) each. By means of this bridge, Missouri-Pacific, through a trackage arrangement with St. Louis Southwestern between the western end of the bridge and Dexter Junction, Missouri, and Paragould, Arkansas, was enabled to set up a low level route from Alexandria, La., and New Orleans to the St. Louis gateway. Northern terminus of the line at Dupoy in St. Clair County is adjacent to East St. Louis and across the river from St. Louis and is included within the switching limits of Greater St. Louis. The yard at Dupoy is one of the largest flat yards in the country.

The main line of the Illinois division from Thebes to Dupoy supports one of the greatest densities of traffic in the United States, for, in addition to trains of the Missouri-Pacific, the line is used under a trackage agreement, by the St. Louis Southwestern (Cotton Belt) for entry into the St. Louis area. The yards at Dupoy are, however, exclusively Missouri-Pacific, as the Cotton Belt maintained its own yards and terminal facilities at East St. Louis.

"Even before the main line of the Illinois division had been completed, it became obvious that there was considerable room for development in the coal fields of Williamson and Franklin Counties and Missouri-Pacific aided in opening those fields by building from Gorham toward Ziegler, a distance of 31.2 miles. On Sept. 1, 1903, a stretch of 26 miles had been completed, and the remaining 5.4 miles went into operation on Feb. 1, 1904, the same date that a 7.7 mile section from Bush to Herrin was completed. In July, 1908, the line from Ziegler to Benton, 9.4 miles, was completed. In August, 1910, the line southward from Thebes to Cairo, 24.5, was completed and placed in service.

Except for construction done by the old W C & W, from Chester to Mount Vernon all the other lines in Southern Illinois were built by the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern, then a close affiliate of Missouri-Pacific. In 1917 the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern, and Missouri-

Pacific were merged as the Missouri-Pacific Railroad Company.

Including the Chester and Mount Vernon (which is a part of the Missouri-Pacific through complete ownership and the tentacles reaching out into the coal fields, Missouri-Pacific has 591.15 miles of trackage in Southern Illinois.

Missouri-Pacific operates in ten counties in Southern Illinois, including Alexander, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Monroe, Perry, Randolph, St. Clair, Union and Williamson. In Randolph County there is a total of 88.17 miles of track—52.50 miles of main track, 10.32 miles of second tracks, and 25.35 miles of siding.

In 1903 when the Illinois division was completed from Valley Junction (north end of Dupoy yard) to Thebes, Chester had direct transportation into St. Louis for the first time by railroad.

The Iron Mountain office was in Chester, located in one of the rock buildings on the river side of Water Street near the wharf. A railroad station was built and many trains came and went each day. In a very short time, 14 passenger and rail trains passed through Chester each day on the three railroads.

People travelled by train day and night, and the jitneys did a thriving business. As people alighted from the train, a half-dozen cab men would be waiting. "Cab, lady?" "Cab to town?" Sometimes it was hard to choose from the group. Each man was supposed to have his stand, but he didn't always stay behind the lines. I remember Fronrose Jones, Charles Faverty, Bill Roberts and Butch Heine. Butch was the first one to appear with a huge car one day—and what a furor it did cause! I remember riding to the train one day with him, and I felt like I was sitting on stilts because it was so high. If I remember correctly, the brake was on the outside. When not in use, it was housed in a building in Buena Vista near the Royal Hotel.

The hotels and boarding houses under the hill were filled with the railroad employees and office help. The levee was in its "hey day" with business thriving. It was wonderful while it lasted. About 1912 the railroad offices were moved to St. Louis and part of that building on the first floor became the office and shops for the Signal Repair Department. John Marcum was superintendent of the department between 1914-1924, with my husband Dick Huffstulter, Happy Hirte, Nate Ellis, Bob Stanwood and Joe Spinner under him. L. A. Baucom was Road Master from September, 1919 until his death in 1945. John Snyder was Agent for many years. Charlie Robertson was the Dispatcher for many years and Harry Weber, Clerk for 25 years. R. H. Holmes was Road Master for many years.

A levee was started in 1940 from Okaw to Riley's Lake, and a wall from there to a point just below the prison where the "Wagon Wheel" once stood.

In the early 50's the old buildings on the north side of Water Street which I named in series two and three, were razed and the railroad tracks moved to higher ground to escape the overflowing Mississippi at times. This was completed, and the train made its first run on the new track in 1957.

A new station was built near Cole's Mill and first occupied in 1956. Here they house the following offices: Superintendent of Illinois Division, Dispatcher, Freight, Train Master, General Road Master and Road Master,

Claim Agent and Diesel Supervisor.

For a very short time the Cotton Belt ran one passenger train in and out of St. Louis.

Studies reveal the Chester Subdivision of the Illinois Division handles more traffic than any other division on the entire system.

Through the years, many employees have retired and made their homes in Chester and vicinity. Some of them are Messers Glen A. Cole, S. A. Hill, Ben Cason, William Crowder, Joe Dugan, Ben Butler, Leon Hagen, Albert Knoke, Edward Hugo Suhre, Otto Harnagel, Red Faverty, Jack Usher, Lloyd Griffin, William Faverty, Clyde Johnson, Walter Berry Charles Rodewald, Chester Barber, Albert Asbury and Wallace Hobbs. A. R. Miller, former Chester boy and Missouri-Pacific employee also retired and is still getting around alone at the age of 87 or 88. He is living in St. Louis. John Marcum, former Signal Supervisor at Chester, is living in Sedalia, Mo.

6.

"Before the coming of the railroads the markets and facilities for transportation were as inconvenient as the produce to be moved was meager; all things were in keeping with the times.

Randolph and Monroe Counties have enjoyed special early privileges in the way of transporation. Long before steam power was invented or even thought of, the Mississippi and Kaskaskia rivers furnished an outlet for all the products to be moved by people. The early medium was by means of the old time flat boat, propelled by poles or sweeps. Then came the steam age, and a new era opened up to the people along the Mississippi. Then came the Iron Horse.

Steamboats have navigated the Kaskaskia as far as Carlyle. The first boat to make the trip was the "Bellevue" in 1837, with Captain Nelson the Commander and owner. In the same year the "Wild Duck" made the passage to the same point, opening a new era to the people along the Kaskaskia. The St. Louis and Cairo Railroad bridge at Evansville prohibited going farther.

It was questionable for some time as to the Mississippi ever being navigated by steamboats because of its swift current. This doubt was dispelled by the landing at St. Louis of the "General Pike" commanded by Capt. James Reed on Aug. 2, 1817. About two years later a second boat ascended the river. This was the "Harriet" from New Orleans on June 2, 1819, and was commanded by Captain Armitage. The trip was made in 27 days. This was the beginning of river communication proper between the marts of New Orleans and St. Louis.

Some of the packet boats I remember were Bluff City, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Cape Girardeau, Gray Packet, and Delta Queen. Captain Leyhe, Jr. and his brother Fred H. owned the Eagle Packet Company, and Captain William Leyhe liked the run from St. Louis south with Fred A. Van Gruenigan as his purser.

I remember making several trips on one of the boats to and from St. Louis. There was music for dancing in the evening for the entertainment of guests. The dining room was spacious and very elegant, food first class,

and service very formal. The leisure ride alone was worth the trip. On Sunday afternoon after Junior League meeting was over, a group of us walked down the Chester Steps to the river to see the steamboats land and take on freight. The "roust-about's" always sang as they loaded, making up their song to fit whatever they were loading, and the tempo fitted the job. This made their work easier.



We would go aboard and as long as there was water enough in the old river channel, the boat would go up to St. Mary's and return to Chester when we would get off and climb the hill for home.

On other days we would take the "Dinky" train or Illinois Southern to Fort Gage for the day and roam over the Fort and surrounding grounds looking for underground graves of which tales had been told. We never seemed to find them though. We would sit on the bluff each time we went and watch the last of the Old Kaskaskia homes crumble and fall into the river, trying to remember what had disappeared since our last trip. Our lunch consisted of cheese, crackers, soda and cookies bought at the Fort Gage grocery. When the evening "Dinky" arrived, we climbed aboard, tired but happy about what we had seen and done.

I think Captain Harvey Neville owned the first ferry boat in Chester, then John Smith (who was the father of Chan Smith), who later sold it to Robert Grah. There also was a ferry boat at the prison owned by L. B. Yourtee and another farther up near Fort Gage called Barnett's ferry owned and operated by the Barnett family. This was the one my family used when we lived on Kaskaskia Island. The boat was operated by horse power. The horse traveled round and round to keep the engine going. One man looked after that, another the piloting and loading. One day my mother, driving a pair of mules to a wagon, came to Chester alone, and she was the only passenger on that trip across. The two men got into a fight and of course, the horse stopped the engine, and the boat was gradually drifting down stream. One of the men had a hatchet and although Mother was badly frightened, she knew she had to do something. She did manage finally to part them and get the boat going again.

Some of the packet boats had excursions occasionally, and they were always enjoyable. In the later years regular excursion boats were and are

now available for all-day or evening trips with food, entertainment of all kinds, including dancing.

Captain Harvey Neville owned the "Nick Sauer," a boat used for hauling wheat from Cole's Mill and cattle to St. Louis. He also used it as a pleasure boat for his family and friends.

We were always happy when the show boats came to town. The Golden Rod, Cotton Blossoms and Frenche's New Sensation are some I remember. There was always excitement through the town when the caliope could be heard coming up the river. There was one caliopist who was exceptionally good—Ray Choisser on the Frenche's New Sensation. With the first strains audible, we could tell when he was operating. He was a master on the instrument. I especially remember seeing the play "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine." The ceiling was wired so that bird calls came from various locations, and that was really delightful.

A few years ago a replica of one of the show boats was on display at either Famous Barr or the Stix store in downtown St. Louis. It was quite large, probably 12 feet long. One side was open to show the interior of the boat—stage, orchestra pit and large auditorium. My interest was immediately aroused, and I stopped and talked to the lady in charge. It seems that her family had been on the original boat for many years, and she was being sent by the company to display the boat at many river towns.

It brought back many memories of all the plays I had seen on the boats, because one summer I lived under the hill, and when my husband worked evenings, my son, Fred, and I always attended. Somehow I always felt that each one was better than the last.

I believe there is still one show boat in operation somewhere, but will be retired next year.



Picture of Mississippi Waterfront in Chester – 1922

7.

"Under-the-hill would not be complete without telling how the Old Mississippi overflowed its banks occasionally and covered most of Water Street and the railroad tracks. Some trains, especially the morning "Dinky," would creep through the lower Chester streets with my husband

Dick Huffstutler at times standing on the cow catcher with long pole, pushing away the debris ahead. Of course, we knew then that some day these tracks must be moved to higher ground, because Old Man River is no respecter of person or things.

"I remember the Mississippi being frozen over at Chester twice, enabling people to walk across. Once was in the 20's. I think that was the time wagons drove across. This lasted for several weeks; however, I never did have a desire to try it, although many people did.

"Our most notable character "under-the-hill" was Cap Boone, a fixture of River Boat Days. He lived in a lean-to which he built on the river bank and moved to higher ground as the river rose. When cold weather came, he never removed any clothing, but just added another layer each time the temperature dropped. The very formal frock coat he wore, once belonged to Mrs. Margaret McNabney's grandfather, Dr. C. A. Mann. When we met Cap and saluted him, his answer was always "Peep! Peep!" in a high pitched voice. Cap worked at odd jobs and gave his money to William (Boe) Born to put into the bank for him. He also knew how to make easy money. He let the roust-about's do the hard work when the steamboats landed, and that night, of course, there would be a crap game, because they all had money. Cap won most of the time, and this he added to his bank account. When he died there was money aplenty to give him a nice burial. The levee has never been the same since Cap Boone died.



In 1944 a tornado struck the bridge and tore out the two center spans and dropped them in the river.

"A bridge over the Mississippi at Chester just below the prison was started in 1939 by the Massman Construction Company and completed in 1942. On Saturday evening, Aug. 4, 1944, at 9:30 p.m. a tornado came roaring down the river, hit the bluff, and veered toward the Missouri shore and destroyed our beautiful bridge. The two central spans were torn from the piers and dropped on their side into the river. When the electric cable broke, flames shot into the air, making possible the sight of just what happened to two people who were nearby and watching at the proper time. Mrs. Gertrude Burklow was on her porch, awaiting her husband's return from work at the Security Hospital. Jack Sutt, who worked at the light and ice plant, was also watching and saw it. He called the toll gate on the bridge and informed the keeper who was Fonrose Jones. All of Chester was in complete darkness for some time.

"Henry Gross and his son Herman were returning from a trip to Kaskaskia. When they came near the bridge approach, something told them to stop and look around, which they did and found no bridge there.

"It was never known whether or not any one was on the bridge at the time. A search in the water showed nothing. A man and his wife with a truckload of furniture had just crossed to this side, and they told the toll taker that some of his furniture had been blown from the truck into the river by the high wind. The new bridge was completed and opened for traffic on Aug. 24, 1946, at 8 a.m.

"Many exciting and unusual events began under-the-hill. I remember one in particular. My aunt in Percy had died, and Jennie Boeger and I went over on the Wabash train for the Saturday funeral service. The Wabash train did not run on Sunday. My husband said, "Perhaps I can come after you late in the afternoon." Of course, we didn't think he was serious, but about five o'clock in the afternoon, here came Dick. He had gotten permission to use the Signal Department's motor car and railroad clearance. What a surprise and what a ride! It was wonderful rolling down the track through green pastures, sitting on an improvised seat for two more people. We made it home safely, delighted with a new experience.

"Another exciting experience was a trip in our motor boat. Maggie and Will Born with their son Kendall, Dick, myself and our son Fred had gone up the river farther than usual one evening to see something special. Darkness was falling fast on our return trip and as we neared home, Dick suddenly guided the boat around an object which was far too close for safety. It was a dead horse floating along in the darkness. Only for a little shake-up, we survived and were glad when we were ashore and at home.

"According to an old newspaper clipping, Chester was the first city ever to be street lighted by electricity in 1883 or 1884. Power was furnished by H. C. Cole and Company, and there were six lights in town. One was on the point of the hill near the Cole residence; one was on the hill above the W. C. W. Railroad; one was opposite John Devine's saloon downtown, and one was at the MacAdam's yard. Another was at the corner of Lindsay's and one at the Catholic Church. Frank Cain did the servicing.

"The first telephones in Chester were one under-the-hill at Gollon's Saloon and one in Buena Vista at the Chester Bottling Works owned by the Welge brothers. Important messages passed between these two phones and were delivered personally. They were operated on batteries.

"The first graphophone to arrive in Chester was owned by Charles Brandes who lived on the corner of Swanwick and Cheapside Streets. It was a Victor with the picture of a dog on the large horn. The records were of cylinder form. I made a record on this machine when I was six years old. I believe the machine now is in the possession of a great grandson, William Preusse of Naperville, a brother of Paul Preusse, Jr. of Chester and Mrs. Wib Alms of Menard, and the son of Paul Preusse, Sr. of Chester.

"P. S. I have just received a letter from one of the distant readers of the Chester Herald-Tribune, Sallie Ballard of Miami, Florida, one of the Ballards who lived in the Old Stone House with her mother and great aunt Abi Francis. It reads in part as follows: Dear Jessie: The old days, how they do come back. The Old Stone House was my great-grandfather's. He was Horace Francis. My great-aunt Abi was his spinster daughter, the

"Southern Sympathizer" who dressed in a red and white striped dress and used to walk up and down Water Street, waving a southern flag as boats of southern prisoners were being taken to stockades in Chicago.

'My grandmother visited a cousin in the stockade in bitter winter weather, contracted quick consumption, leaving Mama an eight-year-old orphan, reared by her grandmother and Aunt Abi. Mama married John Ballard.

'The old dresses you spoke of, ante-bellum styles, are still beautiful treasures of the fourth generation of nieces. The sheer one, silk grenadine, was worn to a ball given by St. Louis in honor of Prince Edward VIII during the Civil War. We don't know which one of the Frances girls went to the ball.

'Great-aunt Abi's hand was sought by a German Count Von Dolschion, but her dad refused to let her go to Germany. No, I am no descent from royalty. Great-grandmother Francis was a pioneer cousin from Virginia. In the old early days, educated people liked to hear her tell of pioneer days. One of her visitors was the Mr. Eads of Ead's Bridge fame.

'Great-grandfather Francis built the Old Stone House about 1834. The cement was floated down the Mississippi on rafts. In the great flood of 1844, boats bringing refugees put their gang planks in at the second floor front windows. The water mark was way up on the fireplace. The plaster never cracked because it was mixed with horse hair.

In 1943 we sold the house to the city so that they could eliminate the sharp corner. They used the stone to build the fire station by the water tower on the hill. In recent years we sold the back lots to the city as a place for the filter plant, and the rest of the front to the Missouri Pacific Railroad.

Chester is such a lovely city, white houses on hills of green, on different levels—so pretty as you approach the river on the Missouri side, and the view of Missouri farms—level and patterned back to the Ozarks, all seen from the Court House yard.

At the top of the route up the City Steps on the right is a two-story house. I always wanted to see lower Chester and the Mississippi River and Missouri from their porch or windows facing Missouri.

We are so delighted, charmed and absorbed in your articles and hope that you continue on up the hill and out to the edge of town.

Sincerely,

Sally Virginia Ballard

In the next series I will begin my climb up the hill.

"As I start my climb up the Chester Hill, I begin to wonder just how many times I have done this before. My step is slower now, but this gives me time to enjoy my memories. I pass the home of my good friends Maggie, Will, and Kendall Born, whose house did not show as I gazed from the levee. My pulse quickens now, because I am nearing the northeast corner of Hancock and Buena Vista Streets where I lived many happy years with my husband Dick and our little boy Fred Elmer.



Chester Hill looking up Buena Vista from Hancock Street.

"These were wonderful years in many ways. The entire neighborhood consisted of nice families with children of all ages who played together. There were the Kennedy children, Horner and Pauline Gersuch, Ammert and Clyde Barnard, Kendall Born, Elmer Beare's little girl, the Darwin children, Robin and Hester Baucom and the Crippen brigade, with Mrs. Crippen as "Mother Hen," always watching over the brood. Sounds of "Lay Low Sheep" each summer evening could be heard resounding through the entire neighborhood until dark. Then the children would all congregate at one home for quiet games until bed time. All of these children learned to swim in a water hole in a nearby pasture where cows went to drink. This was fed by a spring farther up the hill. Many hot afternoons Mrs. Gersuch took her book with the brood following, headed for the pasture for a swim, as she sat under a tree to read. Children "under-the-hill" swam in the river, but that was off-limits for our children.



Elementary school for colored children on Hancock Street.

"The elementary school for colored children was on Hancock Street at the back of the former Rock Presbyterian Church which had been made into a residence. Across Buena Vista at the lower end of the block was a lumber yard owned by E. S. Clemens which he bought from Nick Beare in 1903. In 1913 L. Schweizer bought an interest in the business, as did his son Bill in 1923. In 1924 the business was incorporated as Clemens Lumber

Company of Chester, combining the two businesses. From 1928 to 1932 it was the only lumber yard in Chester. In 1932 the two Schweizers bought the Clemens share and became sole owners. Now, after 66 years of service as of March 1, 1969, the Clemens Lumber Company was sold to Harold J. Reiss, son-in-law of J. L. Montroy of Chester. It will retain the name of Clemens Lumber Company.

"The large brick house with the many porches next door where E. A. Crippen and his family lived then, was originally the home of William Schuchert and his wife. They had no children. William J. Schuchert took up his residence in Chester in 1848 and had been in business for himself since 1867. His native place was Ottendorf, Hanover, Germany, where he was born Sept. 28, 1832. He received his education there in the public schools. At the age of 16 he was brought by his father to America. In 1849 he returned to Germany for his younger brother John F., having saved sufficient out of his wage of \$10 per month to make the trip. They returned to Chester in Nov., 1849. In 1852 he went to California, returning in 1858. For a time then he clerked and in 1867 became proprietor of his own business where he remained, and also acquired other properties. He was married to Louami F. Costellow in April, 1860. The Costellows were originally South Carolinians and came hither via Tennessee. Mr. Schuchert was elected Mayor of Chester in April, 1881, the duties of which office he discharged with great credit to himself and his adopted city.

"Mr. Schuchert built the building on the corner next to his beautiful home. The lower floor was used for a store building, and I am told he let the IOOF Lodge use the upstairs for their lodge hall for the price of \$1.00 as long as he owned the building. The lower floor for some time now has been the office of Clemens Lumber Company.

"Just across Hancock Street on the corner, Miss Lizzie Pomeraski lived and operated a millinery store. In those days most hats were hand-made, and she was an artist at her trade.

"Farther up the hill were the homes of Attorney Arthur Crisler, which has been made into an apartment house, and Attorney Abe Gordon, father of our friend and schoolmate Florence, and Mrs. Nathan Cohen, who still lives in the residence. Directly across the street beside the home of Mrs. John Gilster was the approach to the Chester City Steps, from the hilltop to its bottom.

"The Chester Hill was the scene of much pleasure when snow covered it. After the evening trains were in, the police would permit coasting straight down Buena Vista to the dead end, and, most of the time, one stood guard. One afternoon Bob Devine asked me to ride down with him on a single sled. I was so frightened by the time we reached the bottom, I decided never to repeat the performance.

"On Saturday nights we always went to the picture show downtown. Maggie Born, Kendall, Dick, Fred Elmer and myself attended, regardless of the weather. At times the hill would be too slick to use the car, so we all walked. As we took one step up, we often slid back two, but after much effort on our parts, we reached the top. The real fun was in going down after the show was over. We had trouble keeping our brakes on and had many a spill.

One morning we awakened to find a very heavy snow which had

driven very high in spots. Mothers took their small children to school that day, because we feared they would get lost in a drift. When we went after them in the evening, there was no difficulty because John Darwin had made a shovel on runners, hitched his horse to it and cleared the sidewalk from bottom to top.

In summer on Sunday evenings Dick and I would sit on our porch and watch the children ride down the hill in their little wgons. Dick had put a siren on our Ford, so he took the Ford horn and put it on Fred Elmer's wagon with the battery underneath. As he went down the hill and honked the horn to pass a car, they immediately moved over, and when they saw the wagon pass them, they looked with an air of disgust. Dick and I enjoyed the joke more than the driver, I'm sure.

As well as pleasure, tragedy came to the hill. One evening the Fire Department was having a trial run down the hill, and when they turned our corner going, I suppose, too fast, the engine turned over. One fireman was carried into our yard and died there. It was our neighbor Johnnie Darwin.

"Years later when our boys were in high school, Jack Devine, Ward Stanley and Fred Elmer were coasting on a single sled. All three were lying on the sled with Fred the bottom man to guide. It had thawed some that day and then froze, leaving rough points. The sled collapsed under their weight and off they slid on the rough ice on their faces. They walked up to the first street light and were looking each other over to see what damage had been done when Oscar Marquette came along and saw their scratched, cut bloody faces. He said, "Boys, climb in and tell me who your doctors are." They went to Dr. Fritze and Dr. Beare. They were all badly cut, but the bottom man was the worst. In the act Fred bit his tongue. Dr. Beare took five stitches in his tongue and eight in the upper lip and nostril. But they survived.

"If the 'Old Hill' could talk it would have many tales to tell, but, anyway, it's a grand old hill. Dick Huffstutler thought so, because his brass front Ford took it in high gear like a soldier, and not many could do that.

9.

"After the flood of 1844 the question of changing the County Seat of Randolph County to a more accessible point became general. The Kaskaskians became greatly alarmed, and Parson Perry of the 'Republican' published at Kaskaskia fought manfully for the old village as did others. Finally a bill providing for the selection of a permanent seat of justice for the County of Randolph was introduced in the General Assembly in January, 1847, and became an "Act" by approval of the Governor on Jan. 30, 1847. It provided that an election should be held on the first Monday of April, 1847, as between towns having aspirations to become or remain the County Capital, and that if one of the contending towns should receive a majority of all votes cast at the election, a second election should be held on the first Monday in May, 1847, to decide between the three towns having obtained the most numerous votes at the first election. The third provision was that in case no absolute majority was obtained, a third election should be held the first Monday of June, 1847, to decide between the two towns having received the greatest number of votes at the second election. Chester

won over Sparta by 42 votes, the total having voted, 1736.

"The second election left Kaskaskia out of the race. The 'Republican' embraced Sparta, because it hated Chester more. Some Chester men who were interested in selling lots and were not residents of Chester, filed a bond to donate \$3500 for the erection of public buildings.

"Several Sparta men promised they would at their own expense build a substantial court house 40x45 feet and two stories high if Sparta were chosen.



First Randolph
County Court
House

"This is Parson Percy's comment on the third election: 'The County Seat election came off on June 7, 1847. Never perhaps in the annals of history was the election more grossly violated. Votes from an adjoining state were freely taken. Boys and persons of doubtful blood were accepted. Chester performed her part with much eclat, and Sparta was not much behind, if we were correctly informed. This game was played off by both of the rival towns for the purpose of breaking down Kaskaskia which they both had been trying to do for years past. We have no doubt that two-thirds of the voters of the county were dissatisfied and would have been no matter which of these two points were successful. So far as we can learn, Chester had received a majority of 40 votes, but Sparta contested the election.'

"Had the previous election been conducted with fairness, Kaskaskia would have remained the County Seat, and we think it hard to lose it by such dishonorable means as have been resorted to. We give below the official returns of this honorable (?) election and leave it to the people to make what comments they please upon this extraordinary increase in population of Randolph County's total votes, 2124. At least 600 illegal votes were polled."

"The County Seat matter was finally disposed of by the Circuit Court during the November term in 1847 and it was decided in favor of Chester. After many citizens' meetings and much dissatisfaction, a session of the County Board was held in the Court House at Kaskaskia Nov. 22, 1847. Present were Edward Campbell, William McBride and James Gillespi. The usual proceedings were followed by Judge Koerner of the Circuit Court and ordered 'that in persuance of a law of the General Assembly of the State of Illinois entitled an act for the location of a per-

manent seat for Randolph County approved Jan. 30, 1847, the records of the county be conveyed to the town of Chester, the present seat of Randolph County, and the clerk of the court remove records and transact all official business required by law to be done at county seat at said town of Chester in the county aforesaid."

The order was signed by each member individually.

Charles Kane, Circuit Clerk, and J. W. Gillis, Recorder, at first refused to move their offices.

The regular December term of 1847 of the County Board was held in the school house at Chester, which was to be a temporary court house. The form of county government was changed under the new constitution, which provided for County Courts to be composed of a judge and two associate justices for each county. The old County Board held its last meeting on Dec. 4, 1849.



First Capitol
of Illinois. —
Kaskaskia,
Illinois

The election of November, 1849, entrusted the affairs of the county to the first county court with John Campbell the County Judge and Be Bailey and John Broser, Associate Justices. The court held its first term on Dec. 17, 1849. John Gillis was County Clerk and John A. Wilson, Sheriff. The new court house was completed during their administration. On June 20, 1850, there appeared in open court, Thomas Mather, James L. Lamb, Stacy B. Opdyke, A. Andrews, Francis Swanwick, Seth Allen, Adolph Black, A. Perkins, Joseph B. Holmes, Joseph Williamson, Judson Clement, John Swanwick, Marmaduke Ferris, Joseph Mattingly, James R. Dunn and Charles Song who had entered into bond to build a suitable court house at Chester at the expense of the citizens of said town, and presented to the County Court said court house for said county to use forever, as their own property in fee without charge or rent, and free from all lien or incumbrance whatsoever.

The court accepted the tender of court house and considered that the said bond had been fully discharged and tendered, thanks of the county to said donors for the gift of said court house.

It was furnished at the expense of the county and first occupied on Sept. 2, 1850. The site of the court house had been selected by the County Board in 1849. The lots on which it was erected had been donated by Seth

Allen who had been very successful in the cooperage business, since most everything at that time was shipped by barrel. The building was erected by William Haskins at the expense of private individuals.

William Taylor contracted with the County Board for the building of the old jail at Chester on Jan. 16, 1849. The jail site was also donated by Seth Allen, but the building was paid for by the county, at a cost of \$140.

What is now the middle section of the present Court House including the court room on the second floor was the first to be erected in 1849. The stone part built especially for the Circuit Clerk and County Clerk was built in 1869 by Herman C. Cole at a cost of \$10,000 including labor and materials. No bonds were issued at that time, and the county paid off at 10 per cent interest. The third wing of the two stories was built in 1911.

Sparta was a poor loser, because for many years they continued to try for the Court House. Every few years the subject would pop up. When I was a teenager we organized a chorus and took our political songs to all of the country picnics. Sparta had a male quartet and they were always there too with their portable organ. Since this was a friendly fight they always allowed us to use their organ. We also had a few torch light processions similar to the ones of the older political days.



Picture of Court House and Bank of Chester after the Grandview Hotel burned in 1908.

10.

“Around the court house are many interesting old buildings. Behind and to the right at the corner of East Buena Vista and Wall Streets is the beautiful old home of Mrs. John Sprigg Gilster.

This house was built by Mrs. Jane Douglas who, widowed with son James, came from Scotland with a large group of relatives in 1855. They all apparently had money, because they bought property, most of them here in the rural area, but Jane stayed in town and bought four lots on the corner of East Buena Vista and Wall Streets. With these lots she acquired two school

buildings and a cottage.

She soon built a two-story brick house, using some of the cottage brick on the interior walls and the old doors between basement rooms. The girls' school building was moved and attached to the home to be used as a kitchen. The boys' school building, which has been kept in good condition, still stands on the Wall Street side in the back. Steps on the other side of the school extended down the terraced hillside to Harrison Street below. This had been a private day school, and Mrs. Gertrude Gnaegy Burklow told me that her father, Adam Gnaegy Sr., attended that school when he was a small boy.

Jane married Mr. McAdams, and this beautiful home was always called the McAdams home. James Douglas inherited this from his mother in 1921. Steven A. Douglas made a speech from the front lawn, it is said.



Gem Theatre owned and operated by Frieda and Art Beare.



Chester Pharmacy, now Victor Drugs.

In the next block is a building of very heavy structure and quite old. The Aspley family lived there for awhile. At one time a bakery and saddlery occupied these rooms.

Farther down the street at 213 W. Buena Vista Street is the First Christian Church, located on the hilltop overlooking the river. This building I think was built and first used by the United Presbyterians, then sold to the Methodists. I don't know when the building was built, but records show that on Aug. 25, 1879, at a quarterly conference meeting, the Trustees reported that the church owned this building valued at \$4000, and the society, out of debt, moved to purchase the Schultz property near the church for a parsonage. The motion was approved and property bought November, 1789. This property was at the corner of Buena Vista and Morrison Streets. Later it was owned by Douglas Harkness in 1919 and is now demolished and used for parking space.

This church building was where I started to Sunday School when they had coal oil lamps and pot-bellied stoves. I sang my first public solo here when I was five years old. Here I became a member of the church and the adult choir in 1900 when I was 12 years old.

Some of the adult choir members were Mrs. Betty Sprigg, Mrs. Jessie James, Mrs. J. M. Dickson, organist, Blanche Eggberry, Will MacKenzie and Bert Allen.

In 1921 we moved into our new church building on the corner of State and Hancock. An educational building was added in 1963. The old building was sold to the Presbyterians. They remodeled and used it until 1962 when their beautiful new church at 1750 Swanwick Street was completed. The Christian Church is a rather new denomination in Chester and now occupies the building.

As I stand on the court house steps looking to my left, I see that the brick house owned by Henry Rickman has been torn down. Behind it still stands the Rock House where Professor Dickson lived so long. He was the Superintendent of Schools. In front of this building is the Grand View Hotel.



Grand View Hotel, Chester, Ill. before it was destroyed by fire in 1908.

The old Grand View Hotel burned in 1908. It was the place of many social affairs, and the beautiful balcony on the front was the meeting place of many celebrities. Mr. O. Oliver was in charge of the saloon there.

The hotel was rebuilt and now John Jungewaelter Jr. is owner and proprietor.

Looking on up the left side of State Street in that block I remember Hart's Clothing Store, Arthur Chenue's Jewelry, Chester Supply owned by Meredith, Short and Cohen, the Western Business Agency where Agnes Burbes Kuhrtz worked, the Chester Herald, Stoeve and then Douglas Marble Works.

Josie Edwards' home came next. I remember her well and was entertained often in her home. Later Mrs. J. Randolph lived there. She was Mabel Achsah Hartzell (Randolph), the great-granddaughter of Governor Shadrach Bond. I remember her quite well.

Laird's Drug Store was next door with Dr. Adderly's office above. The John Devine home and Kennedy's Store, now Carpenters Hall, came

next. Most of these have been changed or demolished for parking, grocery store, paint shop, drug store, Dr. Wright's chiropractic office, and Padgett's Nursing Home. This nursing home is in the Devine home, the inside of which remains the same, but for a sun porch which has been added to the front of one side and a man's dormitory added in the back. A member of the Devine family, John, was able to spend his last days in the home, which made him very happy.



Chester Supply Co. owned by Short and Cohen. Picture of Bill Cohen, father of Cohen who owned the store. It was where the Food Park is now located.



L. A. Kennedy building now Carpenter's Hall.



The Douglas Granite works, later Henry Stover, and old Chester Herald building, now beauty shop and Town & Country Gas Co.

As we turn left and walk down Young Avenue, Dr. L. B. Torrence had his dental office on the corner across the street. I remember the Charles Thies house which originally belonged to Judge Hartzell who married Mary Elizabeth Holmes, granddaughter of Governor Shadrach Bond. That too, has been demolished.

I remember the Horner home where Miss Sarah, the piano teacher, and her sister Lula lived. Then there were the two Roberts sisters, Kate and Udie, with their brother Harry. The St. Vrain home with Minnie, Kitty and mother, Mrs. Jessie Horine James, and her two sons, then the large Bronson home now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ted Search Jr. Across the street lived Edwina Morse and her mother who taught school here. This was called "Quality Row."

On a vacant lot behind the Chester Supply in that block was the place for tent meetings. Many evangelists came for two or three weeks of meetings. Rev. Ed and Joe Meads were two we especially liked. Boards were used for seats, straw on the ground, and a large platform for ministers and choir. The choir consisted of members from all the churches. We really had a big group, and the music was beautiful.

Every night the tent would be packed to overflowing, for these religious services. These were days when religion flourished, and people attended their churches. Many people were converted and traveled the road of our Lord.

"Looking to my right from the Court House steps, I see the First National Bank building. I remember the old Phoenix Block on that corner which burned in 1917 and 1918. It was rebuilt and completed in 1919. E. A. Crippen was the contractor.



The Phoenix Block picture in 1909, which burned in 1917 and rebuilt in 1918 and 1919. Now the site of the First National Bank In Chester.

During the Phoenix Block days the first floor held the bank, Southern Illinois Power and Light Company, Chester Herald Tribune, and the post office, plus the stairway to the third floor. The second floor was reserved for offices, mostly attorneys, and a library also used for Christian Science services. There also was a large banquet hall which was much in demand.

On the third floor front was the Chester Theatre with a large stage used for plays, concerts, dances, Baccalaureate services and commencement exercises. My own was held there in May, 1905. This I remember well. Across the hallway was the Masonic Hall.

In the new building the lower floor contained the same businesses. The second floor did not have a banquet hall, but the telephone office moved in, plus the abstract office. On the third floor the theatre and Masonic Hall remained.

The Chester Theatre was a busy place in those days, because home talent plays were very popular at that time. It was a good way for churches to make much needed money. Often a company representative was employed to supervise, but often we played on our own. I've played parts from an end-man in a minstrel to a member of a singing-dance chorus, plus character parts and concert soloist.

I particularly remember one play that brought an overflow crowd two nights. One night at the Chester Theatre and one night at the Chester Opera House, the play was given as a benefit for the grade school gymnasium. It was called "The Womanless Wedding" with John File as the bride and Joseph Montroy, the groom. I don't remember the "minister," but he used a Sears-Roebuck catalogue for the ceremony.

I was doing all the accompanying which was a mixture of music—sheet, manuscript, and some by memory, all to be cued in at the proper

time. In the early morning of the first evening performance, I slipped and sat down very hard on a concrete step, bruising my tail bone which caused much pain. The doctor was called immediately, but it was in the afternoon before I could sit up with any degree of comfort. The entire company was plenty worried, as I was. Anyway, with two fat cushions I managed the two nights, much to the relief of all concerned.

Another outstanding performance in the theatre was a concert by the members of an old-fashioned singing school. A gang plank had been placed in the middle aisle with one end on the stage and the other end at the cross aisle. Members all dressed in old-fashioned clothes, entered from the hall door as their names were called, walked up the gang plank and took their places on the stage. The first act was our singing lesson, and then the concert followed. These are just samples of many nice things we did.

The charity ball was always something to look forward to each year. It was not only a social event, but the proceeds were used by the St. Elizabeth's Society for the poor.

The bank was remodeled and enlarged in December, 1965, celebrating the 75th anniversary of its founding. The post office had moved to its new building in Buena Vista and the Illinois Power Company moved to a new location on the other side of the building. The Chester Herald Tribune moved down the street where Pearl and Jack Johnson once had a store. The third floor theatre is no more. It has been made into offices of Radio Station KSGM. The Masonic Hall remains.

There were several outstanding attorneys in the early years whom I remember. A. G. Gordon who graduated from McKendree College in 1871 practiced in Steeleville until moving to Chester in 1874. He was selected the first Prosecuting Attorney of Randolph County. John H. Lindsay was elected County Judge in 1873. In partnership was his young son-in-law, Ralph E. Sprigg, a native of the county and son of James D. Sprigg, a former prominent citizen and office holder. Ralph Sprigg was attentive and determined and made the best of his advantages to become one of the very best attorneys in the area. When he was to plead a case people flocked to the court room to hear him. Don E. Detrich was elected Prosecuting Attorney in 1880. A. E. Crisler was also very prominent in his profession. J. B. Simpson, a native of Randolph County, was one of Nature's noblemen. He took up the study of law unaided by a teacher and was admitted to the bar in 1871. He was a Republican candidate for County Judge in 1882, but was defeated. H. C. Horner was a native of Arkansas and was admitted to the bar in 1877. He rapidly took high rank among his fellows. He was a close student, clear and forceful in argument and well versed in law. He wrote and published a set of books for which he received recognition. J. Fred Gilster, E. H. Wegener and William H. Schuwerk, all deceased, were among a younger group, but very successful.

As I leave the bank building and walk up State Street, I remember the buildings of older days. The Phillips building which housed the Harkness restaurant had the telephone office above it. The first operators were Cora Miller Dunnerman and Ruth Eggbury Hathaway with Eugene Gordon as Superintendent.

Paskel's Store was really a curiosity shop. From the grade school we would go there and ask for something unusual, so it would neccessitate

much searching on Mr. Paskel's part. This gave us the opportunity of looking around, and he never seemed to find what we asked for. Then there was Judge Wegener's office. He was always glad to see old friends.

Mayme Whirle had a millinery store with beautiful handmade hats. Then came the children's delight—a small confectionary operated by Mr. and Mrs. Will Cain. We called her Miss Jennie. From the grade school we would go with two or three pennies for candy. In that store there was such a variety of three pieces for a penny. We would ponder sometimes ten minutes before deciding how to spend the pennies, and Miss Jennie would smile and patiently wait.

Henry Nagel had a grocery with Ray Manwaring as helper. Pearl and Jack Johnson had a dry goods store, Schmitts, a meat market, and then there was Mr. Schenk's hardware. He was a peculiar man—a bachelor with money who slept in his store and ate his meals at the hotel. My brother Elmer Gant worked for him after school, on Saturdays, and during summer vacations.

One summer Mr. Schenk took a short vacation, leaving Elmer in charge of the store to the dismay of the other businessmen, since he never before had taken a vacation. I am told that he put in Chester's first water system, paying for it himself.

George Douglas had a livery stable and saloon. Another house or two and on the corner of State and Market Streets was the home of Minnie Adams, school teacher and city librarian for many years.

On this lot the Jaycees have just recently built shuffle board courts primarily for the use of Senior Citizens, but they are available to any Chester residents. Equipment may be obtained at the Padgett's Nursing Home across the street from the courts. The Jaycees are to be complimented for this project, since they are a desirable addition to the recreation facilities for the city. Other old buildings have been replaced with the Crippen apartments and the bank parking lots.

To the right around the corner of Miss Minnie's home down Market Street stood the old school house where so many of us spent our school days. It is all gone with nothing left as a reminder, except our memories.

The building just off the school grounds facing Franklin Street where Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Otteson live was originally built as a Baptist Church, the first in Chester, I think. It was in this church building that my brother Elmer and I, at a revival meeting, made our decision for Christ and became members of the First Methodist Church in 1900.

The City Hotel is down, as well as others in this area. I almost forgot to say that at one time we had an organ factory here. It was located on Bissel Street about where the Bunny Bread Company is now. Dewey Schenkel's father worked there.

"On the corner of State and Market Streets the old Staley home still stands, but the Episcopal manse and church have been replaced this year by a lovely modern parsonage for the Baptist minister, the Rev. Floyd Jent.



Edith Staley home, Episcopal Church and parsonage, now the First Baptist Church parsonage.

The beautiful old Swanwick house stands among the old trees, like a sentinel, guarding the neighborhood, watching the changing world since 1849. This property with a small house on it was first owned by the Strattons who deeded it in 1837 to Eleagover Walker who in 1838 deeded it to Richard Servant. In 1841 it was passed on to L. U. Lavillebeauvere, then in 1849, it was bought by the Swanwicks, and the new house was built by them. It was the two-story brick which is now the front of the house—the kitchen and dining area being in the basement, that style of architecture being popular then. I recently was told that one of the Swanwick maids named the city of Chester. In the very early days it had been called Smith's Ferry. Not liking the name, a contest was held, and this maid wrote such a complimentary story of its beauty which reminded her so much of Chester, England, that this settled the question.

In 1905 Joshua Rickman became the owner. I quote from the Chester Herald Tribune's 50 year ago column of recent date: "E. A. Crippen is in town remodeling the Rickman house." That was when the addition was added to the back. Since 1950 Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Mullins have had the pleasure of owning and residing in this lovely home.

The Lewis Morrison home next door was built by him in 1896. Their daughter married a Methodist minister, Rev. E. J. Gale who at the time of his retirement in 1946 was president of Missouri Wesleyan College. They came to Chester and lived in this house until their deaths in 1955 and 1957. The property now, plus farms across the river, are in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Gaylor Rybolt, who divide their time between the two places. Mrs. Rybolt is the daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Gale.

The old Spencer home later owned by John Meredith has been replaced with a modern apartment building of four apartments owned by Mrs. Morris Frager and her son Ervin.

The Speckman house with Henry and Miss Mary Speckman and Miss Anna Schulte, was left to the Catholic Church with the provision that a home for the aged was to be built. Now a lovely nursing home stands there of which Chester is very proud.

Georgia Chadwick's brick home is still here, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Cook who have made it their home with two apartments upstairs. Some other buildings have been replaced by new homes and the office of Dr. Mathis, a surgeon and gynecologist.



Dr. Morrison Home,
now Dr. John Beck
residence.

The Joseph Morrison brick home and dental office have been sold to Dr. John Beck, M.D., who came to Chester in 1964. He has a wife, Mary and seven wonderful small children, and this is just the place to raise them. The Becks did some remodeling to the kitchen I believe. Dr. Beck, until last year, used the office pretty much as it was with some small changes. He then remodeled it by adding to the back and one side. He now has most of the interior paneled and has taken an associate physician, Dr. James M. Whittenberg. We are very, very fortunate to have them both.

Two small Martin houses are here, but Dr. Hoffman's office is gone. Juergens the Tailor is still with us in the 900 block of State Street since 1911. H. F. William Juergens being from Germany, knew his profession well and when first coming to the United States, carried his samples in his trunk, calling at the homes for orders. In 1894 he opened a shop in Steeleville, moving to Chester in 1911 and locating his shop on the first floor of a building between Mr. Henry Eggers and Mr. Gus Knapp. He soon built his own shop across the street where the Dr. Omer Hoffman home is now. In the 20's dry cleaning had become popular, so he moved up a couple of lots and built a new building in which he added equipment for dry cleaning, at 918 State Street. His son Henry had worked with him, learning designing and tailoring, but he was called into service in World War II and returned home two months after his father's death, Sept., 1945. Henry took over the shop which he later bought from the family. In the whole metropolitan St. Louis area only a very few can draft and cut a paper pattern for garments. Besides civilian suits he specializes in riding habits or

saddle suits which he has furnished for riders in 21 states. Real tailoring is almost a lost art, and Chester is very fortunate to have one of the very few. In 1960 Henry added an addition to his building and installed new equipment.

The first building built by Henry's father was bought by Fred Dunnermann in 1930 which he moved down the hill across the highway from about the location of the old colored church. It stands on the hillside in the midst of trees and undergrowth and can be seen, if one looks closely, on the right driving down the hill.

The Sigmund Brinkmann home was remodeled, and Dr. E. Ralph May had his residence and office there for many years until his retirement and death some years ago.

The Petrowski tailor shop, then a dry cleaning plant, has been replaced by a two-story business building owned by Jim Frazer, as does the Dr. May home. He handles furniture, electrical appliances, and other items.

The Rudolph Holmes home is no more. The Martin filling station has taken its place several years ago.

We now touch "Legal Hill" so named because of the attorneys who have resided there, including Mssrs. Ralph Sprigg, Clay Horner, E. H. Wegener, J. Fred Gilster, William H. Schuwerk. Residents also included a number of doctors: A. E. Fritze, J. W. Beare, J. M. Whittenberg, Max Aszman, W. R. MacKenzie, Frederick Vogt, Gerald Hammond, Albert Wolff, an optometrist, Robert C. Wolz and his associate, dentists, Milton Zemlyn and I. D. Newmark.

Beyond Legal Hill on the old Meredith property is our Community Grade School at 650 Opdyke Street and the American Legion Alva Courier Post 487 at 500 E. Opdyke.

Farther out and facing the river a large community called "Katzville" has arisen. The city swimming pool is nearby and the Nite Hawk restaurant and truck stop. The old Cleary house was remodeled many years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Katz, and the family has enjoyed this beautiful place for many years. Their three boys were raised here, as was a niece, Gail Now Mom and Dad are alone.

Dr. Fritze's house at 139 E. Opdyke, built in 1904, still stands like Noah's Ark—strong and sturdy, and it is still in the family, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Welge, where their three sons were raised. Now the grandchildren think it is a wonderful place to come. The Welges have done extensive alteration on the house, but nothing to alter its beautiful style of architecture.

Mrs. Jennie Boeger and I live just across the street, and we have wonderful neighbors all around us, including the Peace Lutheran Church across the street in charge of the Rev. and Mrs. O. M. Meyer.

At the end of the street at State and Opdyke where once Midendorf's Confectionary was, stands a Texaco station operated by Frank Cook.

I regret to say that the once-beautiful brick home of Dr. William MacKenzie was allowed to remain vacant and to deteriorate until about two years ago when it was bought by Mr. and Mrs. William Mullins and demolished. He also owns the Howorth property adjoining it. This home has been vacant also for several years. There is a rumor that these lots may

be used to build homes especially for elderly people, and another location chosen for the building of homes for those in the lower income brackets.

13.

"The property at the northwest corner of State and Opdyke Streets where my last story ended was a rectangle 105 feet on State and 140 feet on Opdyke. The street on the south at one time was Madison, but I think this has been changed. At the present time the Royal Hotel is on the east.

In early years when this area was farm land this particular property was owned by the Henry Schrader family. Their farm horses were kept where the present Schroeder Furniture Store now stands. In the immediate area there was just one other house—a small one on the property now owned by Wilbur Saak at 1158 George Street.

The first Schrader home was a small one on the exact spot where their new home was built later, using the same basement, occupied now by Mr. and Mrs. Clem Hamm. In the southwest corner was a long low building used as a cooper shop where barrel staves were made to supply the Buena Vista Milling Company (owned by the Gilsters) for the barrels in which their flour was shipped.

On the northwest corner was a store building which through the years was used for various businesses, including Mr. Artmann's Saddle Shop, Heitman's Confectionary, and later the Middendorf Confectionary.

About 1892 Dr. Max Aszmann, then a young physician just out of school, leased a small piece of the ground facing State Street from Mrs. Lizzie Schrader and built an office where he stayed 48 years of the 50 years he practiced medicine. The last two years he practiced from his home because of failing health. He died in 1942. This small building still stands and is now the barbershop of Joseph Montroy.

Between the confectionary and cooper shop facing Opdyke was a two-story five-room house built by the Schraders. As these buildings were added, Henry Schrader's son and his wife (called Aunt Lizzie by most of her friends) owned some of them, and at her husband's death, she bought the remaining ones. She then shared her large two-story home with a cousin, Mrs. Mary Bold, and her daughter Josie who later became Mrs. Clem Gollon. Marie Gollon was born in this house which has remained her home through the years, because when Aunt Lizzie died, she left this property to Marie, who is now Mrs. Clem Hamm.

In 1937 Marie had the smaller house facing Opdyke moved back to the east side, and the Texaco Station has occupied the entire northwest corner since.

Next to this property on State Street was a store building used first as a music store and later as a saloon. The second floor was used by the colored people as a church.

Then came a small hotel and restaurant owned and operated by the Lenherr family and called "The Lone Star Restaurant" about the late teens. In 1930 Joe Knapp bought the hotel and remodeled it. It was very popular in its day, serving the public as well as being a show room for the traveling salesmen. They were called trunk showings. It then became the Royal Hotel. In 1947 it was taken over by the Koenemans who did extensive

remodeling; then, in the fall of 1965, the Motor Lodge was added by them and the name changed to Royal Motor Lodge.



At one time, Old Lone Star Restaurant site, now the Royal Hotel.

Several houses were demolished for parking—Mr. Busse's tailor shop, Bill Aszmann's saloon and Gus Lang's meat market where the best homemade liver sausage could be found. These were replaced by Cowell and Sons, Inc., an automobile business. On the corner of State and Stacey Streets the "Village Blacksmith" stood with Mr. Kuntz at the anvil. This has been replaced by the Sinclair Station.

Turning the corner here to the right we see the Buena Vista Milling Co., owned and operated by the Gilsters in the same location for more than 80 years. Many changes have taken place over these years. When the making of flour was discontinued here, poultry was added to the feed business, then poultry was discontinued, and for some time it has been feed and seed. Since 1929 it has been owned and operated by William H. Welge, a member of the Gilster family.

Between the mill and the blacksmith shop was the mill pond where I remember skating many times, as did other young people, but it too is gone, leaving us with memories only.

At the top of the Mill Hill on the opposite side of the street is the Chester Clinic of Drs. Newmark and Zemlyn. This hill has always been known as the Mill Hill, and the youth of the town thought it was made just for coasting when we had snow. We really used it. I remember about 1925 when I had a youth choir at the Methodist Church composed of 30 high school students singing at the Sunday evening services, a big snow came during the week. At rehearsal there was some discussion of wanting to go coasting that Sunday evening. This is the way we settled it—by wearing our coasting clothes to church since our robes would cover them, and after church we would all go coasting. I'll probably shock some people by saying that on that evening, I wore my son's Boy Scout pants to church also, and went coasting with the young people. We had a wonderful evening.

Further down the hill is a large two-story building that once was a planing mill where furniture was made with Detlef Ahrens and his helpers. Mr. Ahrens was the father of Mrs. Emma Buenger and Mrs. Herman Kraft. This building now has been made into apartments.

Near the feet of the hill is the Elks' Club and on the corner, the Standard Station of Atchison and Brown. From Stacey out State Street to the Fairgrounds for a few blocks, homes have been built on both sides, but we do miss the old laundry which burned a few years ago. Then Novak's farm was on the left and across the road was pasture land the topography of which was very rough with little hills and valleys. Later Mrs. Austin Cole Sr. owned the land and, seeing great possibilities, presented some to the Presbyterian Church for a new building at 1750 State Steeet. In 1962 the new church was finished.

At 1900 State Street Mrs. Cole presented a large tract for the building of a hospital which began operation in October, 1962, with a patient capacity of 46 plus a solarium. They soon added beds in the solarium, making 56. A well-equipped physical therapy department was added in 1967, and they are now in the process of building a new wing, adding 29 beds for patients plus an intensive care unit. There is room in the above-ground basement for 26 beds later, which will make 112 beds. Chester is very proud of this new hospital.

The old Fairgrounds where horse racing, fairs and picnics were held was very popular, but it is no more. Beautiful homes grace the race tracks which we call Fair Ground Circle with the remaining area filled as well. The old grandstand, I think, is about where the Trailer Court is now. Across the street from the front entrance is Carter's Grocery for the convenience of people in this area.

My greatest memory of going to the fair or a picnic at the Fairgrounds is taking home a good sunburn and a headache.

14.



Mr. Isaac Beare and Dr. Torrence at State and Young Avenue. Dr. Torrence Dentist Office, later Dr. Klippert's.

"Now I shall return to Dr. Klippert's office and walk up State Street on the north side. First I see the little shoe shop where Mr. Grieser mended shoes for many years. That is now part of Dr. Klippert's yard. Next to this is Mr. Seidel's store building with Tillie Young's home adjoining. Mr. Seidel came to his store each day even though he had little on his shelves. He sat on the front steps and smoked his pipe. We used to go there from school and ask for something. His answer was always the same—"I got nottings." Either he didn't have or wanted to keep the last piece on the shelf. Since his death there has been a church and several small businesses started, but none lasted long. I think it is now vacant with a nice apartment above occupied.

The Schroeder home and barber shop were next. Mr. Schroeder's daughter was the wife of Mr. Paskel who owned a store farther downtown. A building used for a cigar factory and a home were next, and then the home of Jim Morrison. The Schroeder and cigar factory buildings have been replaced by the First Baptist Church, completed in 1950, having built and used the basement since 1940. This beautiful church is across the street from the lovely new parsonage built this year, 1969.

The Jim Morrison home where the Chester Public Library now stands was a long white house containing 13 rooms and no porches. He never married, living there alone and having his meals at a hotel. At one time Ev. Clemens and his mother lived with him for awhile. He was a brother of Lu Morrison whose home was across the street, but Mr. Jim's was much older.

The Chester Public Library was a gift from C. B. Cole, and was built in 1928. He died just after its completion, but before its dedication. A private family service was held at the home and a public service at the library. A daughter, Miss Alice, requested the Chester Choral Club, which she sponsored, to sing for the service. Our director was Mr. McFadden from St. Louis, and he came that day to direct us in singing "Goin' Home."

In 1965 the daughters of Percy Carter Withers and Edna Cole Withers furnished the children's library downstairs in honor of their parents, thus helping to continue the work of their grandfather, C. B. Cole. Miss Minnie Adams was the librarian from its beginning until she became ill and Mrs. Paul Nagel took her place on Aug. 1, 1957. When the Children's Library was furnished in 1965, Mrs. Waldo McDonald was chosen for that department.

The large two-story frame house next to the library has been replaced by an ultra-modern brick four apartment building owned by Mrs. Morris Frager and her son Ervin.

The Dr. James big home has been remodeled into apartments, and the little store built in 1883 where the Dolles Sisters had a hat shop for many years, with a home built in 1897, adjoining, has been used as a florist shop by Rev. Floyd Jent's wife. She has now retired, and it is vacant.

Dr. Hoffman's home, formerly owned by Doc Cleiman and now the home of Mrs. Gordon Beers, still stands. The Snook home was replaced by the Ford Garage.

George Rhienacker, Jr. built a new home at 851 State Street. It replaced a brick two-story building that records show ownership of property by the Chester Methodist Church, conveyed to the church on May 20, 1850.

I am told that the Methodists held services upstairs and German Methodists, downstairs. Later the church sold it, and it was made into a dwelling, and, at a much later time, was owned by Mr. Max Katz.

From this building up to the corner at Servant was the home of Dr. A. G. Gordon with offices on the lower end and home near the center. In 1919 the Methodist Church bought this property and sold the lower part to Rudolph Holmes where he built a duplex for himself and wife and for his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar C. Schroeder.

The home was there for the parsonage, so a church was built. Later, about 1955, the parsonage was removed to make room for church expansion, while a new parsonage was being built at 725 Ann. In 1962 a new educational building was built with a wonderful Fellowship Hall which is used extensively for church activities as well as a meeting place for Scouts, Retired Teachers, rummage sales, banquets, etc.

Turning left on Servant Street we see the Joe Knapp home standing high on the ridge with the Stadler, Welge and Baronowsky homes. We no longer see the old Dr. Frank Zilliken home. It has long been gone. Turning left down Ann Street, our mind goes back to the old Chautauqua Days when few homes were on the hillside at the street's end.

We were members of the chautauqua traveling circuit and, each summer, under a big tent, we were furnished cultural entertainment afternoons and evenings for a week. That was the highlight of the summer activities. Homes have long filled all the space in that area now. I remember a few colored people near during the chautauqua days—the Holdens and Pennys. Mother Amanda Penny used to tell fortunes with cards, and many people went there, including myself and some of the other girls. Mrs. Penny died less than a year ago. She had been living with some of her family in Alton and was brought back to Chester for interment. I went to the chapel to see her. She didn't look more than 70 years, although she was more than 90 years old. I met two very lovely granddaughters there that day.

We have always had nice colored families in Chester. Out near the Evergreen Cemetery lived the Millner family. Mrs. Millner had married a minister who died, and she lived there alone. Mrs. Ralph Sprigg and some of the leading citizens each summer gave a homemade ice cream festival on the Millner lawn to help her pay the taxes on her property. I remember taking a trip east one summer and discovered that the Pullman porter was Ed Millner from Chester, and I really received special services.

Our present colored people now are all special. There is Mother McGee and all of her family. She was one time called "Mother of the Year" by the news reporter for her life and the wonderful family she raised. Chester wouldn't be the same without Mabel and John Harris. Mabel used to drive me to the doctor in Du Quoin when I first moved here, and we had some lovely picnics in the school park, then often called on my old close neighbors. There is Pearl Lyghtle, Hoses Bixby, and, I'm sure, many more whom I do not know.

I remember also the Caldwell family. Mother Caldwell and daughter Hattie worked for my mother, and then Hattie worked for me. She studied piano with me and did very well too. None of them live here now.

A low rental housing project has been built in the area from Ann Street along the back road to Water Street. From Ann to the entire area

over to Security Hospital property there are new homes built on the hillsides and valleys including the area eastward to the Catholic Church. The church has bought a lot of property near the church, behind the school for baseball, across the street for the Knights of Columbus Club, and the Julia Singer property on the corner where she had her home and dressmaking shop. This is to be used for parking. The old nuns' home was a frame building across from Miss Julia's, facing Swanwick. One evening Miss Julia was working late in her shop and discovered their house was on fire. She ran into the street calling for help, but it burned to the ground. A new home was soon built. I remember the latticed porch in the back where the nuns sat on warm summer evenings. At that time I lived near and ran errands for them. I often would go over and sit on this porch with them in the evenings. The building is now gone and space used for parking. They have established their convent in the old Weber house at 915 Swanwick, next to the rectory. A library has been added to the school, a gift from Anna Schulte at her death.

I remember the McAdams' pasture in this area. Paul Crippen as a small boy herded the McAdams' cows up the main street, around past our house on Swanwick Street, down West Church Street to the pasture each morning. He would take them home in the evening for milking and for the night. That was my introduction to the Crippen family who later became my very good friends.

In this pasture now we have a small foundry where special castings are made. This is owned by Bob Schroeder and Orville Cook, I think.

Over on State Street where Gus Knapp's home and meat market once stood, the Joy Theatre is now the home of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They plan to remove the theatre for parking space. Next was the Henry Eggers home with Miss Lydia's millinery and later, Wolff's Meat Market. On the corner is the Welge Furniture Store and Funeral Chapel.

15.

"The Welge furniture store had a very early beginning with Conrad Welge and Fred Heinrich Boeger when they made furniture by hand. The exact date is not known when they located in the eastern half of what is now known as the Ace Hardware Store at 977 State Street. It is presumed that Henry Gilster, who was associated in business with his brother Louis on Swanwick Street, built this part of the building with living quarters above which the Boegers occupied. When the men were busy working or delivering their products, the women kept the store.

Many people today remember Grandma Boeger and son Fred. The Welge and Boeger partnership was dissolved in 1882. Mr. Boeger bought and moved his family to a small house at 138 E. Opdyke to which he added rooms and continued to work at his profession with a Mr. Struess. Their initials "B" and "S" could be found on the back of their products. Mrs. Jennie Boeger has a large desk made by Fred's father with inlaid trim. Several people in Chester have pieces marked with "B" and "S."

The Welge business now became Conrad Welge and Son. The sign in front of the store read "C. Welge and Son, Dealers in Furniture and Carpets." This was the oldest son Charles. I want to say now that Conrad

Welge made by hand the beautiful balcony rail at the Chester Opera House which we enjoyed for so many years, and I'm wondering how many times Ted Mueller varnished and polished it while he worked there.

In 1896 another son Rudolph joined the firm, and it become C. Welge and Sons. In 1902 they built their own store at 953 State Street, its present location. When the father retired it became Welge Brothers and still carries that name.



Interior of Welge Bros. Furniture Store around 1912. Far left - Charles F. Welge, In center - Charles Staats; On right - Rudolph Welge.

A mortuary had always been included in their business with services conducted at the family home. In the very early days coffins were made by hand. Country folks, when coming to town to order one, would bring a corn stalk the same length of the person, as a measurement.

In 1930 Welge Brothers built a lovely chapel on the west side of the building with a driveway. I remember well the Sunday afternoon they held open house for the public. I came down from McKendree College at Lebanon where I was House Mother in the boys' dormitory (Carnegie Hall) to assist Miss Claire Lehmen in furnishing a program of music for the occasion.

At the present time Welge Brothers is the oldest retail business in Chester under the same name and same family ownership. This business includes four generations and is 87 years old. Conrad Welge represents the first generation and sons Charles and Rudoph, the second. All are deceased. Paul Welge, son of Rudolph, is the third generation, and the fourth generation is Paul Preusse Jr., grandson of Charles, and Carl Welge, son of Paul and grandson of Rudolph.

About 1890 Henry Gilster dissolved his partnership with his brother Louis, built another room on the west side of the building then occupied by Welges at 977 State and opened a grocery store. He also built a lovely brick home next door for his family. He had an underground passageway between the two basements which he used for storage. When Welge Brothers moved in 1902 to their new location, Mr. Gilster opened a dry goods store in that room which was operated by his son Herman for many years.

After Henry Gilster's death in 1907 the grocery was managed first by Henry Decker, and later owned by William Haier and Mr. and Mrs. Herman Boeger, but operated by George Haier for 17½ years. At Herman Gilster's death the dry goods department was operated for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Ed Middendorf. For nearly 50 years the offices of the Gilster Milling Company occupied the second floor of the building.

In 1959 a new front was installed on the lower floor and Mr. Parker opened a hardware store, using both rooms. In 1963 he joined the Ace Hardware Company and traveled while his son-in-law and daughter, the Carle Mahns, took over the store and managed it until 1968 when Don Stallman bought the business and began its management. The building and house were sold in 1960 to St. Mary's Catholic Parish. The house was removed and the space used for the parking and a playground for St. Mary's school girls at recess and noon for games.

On the lots beside the Gilster residence to the corner once stood a long white house of two stories with porches across the front upstairs and down. That was owned by one of the Brinkman families. The Knapp building built in 1929 and bought in 1937 by John Jungewaelter Sr. and the Leonard Building have replaced that space.

The Jungewaelter building contains on the first floor, a self-help laundry and the Chester Bakery, with apartments above. The Chester Bakery has been in the Jungewaelter family for 30 years, operated by Mr. Jungewaelter with sons Clyde and Earl as helpers. The sons are now operators and "Pop" is a helper at times. The bakery was started by a man named Miller, and when he left, Bill Welge had Mr. Jungewaelter operate it for a short time. He then bought it in 1939.

In this block some of the buildings have been interchanged by several occupants until it is like a Chinese puzzle to explain. William Welge was a photographer, and about 1902 he built and operated a studio at 981 State Street, where he stayed until Justin Leonard came to Chester in 1935 and bought his business where he stayed until 1958 when he bought his present building at 967 State from Charles Oetting. At that time the DeCrow Drug Store and the Lamkin Jewelry Store occupied the two store rooms. The Lamkins moved to another location, and Mr. Leonard established his studio here. Mr. DeCrow died, and his wife now operates the DeCrow Confectionary. Mr. Leonard in 1962 added a complete second story with two apartments and three work rooms.

Mr. and Mrs. Spurlock established the Dollar Store in the Welge building in 1962. They both were killed in a car accident in March, 1966, and two months later Mrs. Kate Boeger who operated a dress and accessory shop in the Singer building closed out her business, and she, with Mrs. Adelpia Lunsford, took over the Dollar Store. Jim Frazer recently bought the Welge building, using the second floor for storing excess furniture. He also is using rooms in the Singer and the Herman Boeger building for display rooms.

The Singer building was owned by three sisters who lived together and operated a hat shop there in the brick section. They also owned all the buildings up to the Ben Franklin Store. I think Mrs. Marie Juegens now owns the brick section except Dr. Albert Wolff's present location, 987 State, which he owns and where he has practiced optometry for one-third of

a century.

A jewelry store has had a place in this block for about 80 years. Mr. Martin Wolff in 1890 opened a jewelry store in the room next to the present Ben Franklin store. This had formerly been a confectionary operated by the Stebers. First the elder Stebers had a bakery at their home and sold the bread in the store. Later the confectionary was operated for several years by Cyril and Min Steber.

In 1900 Martin Wolff moved to Murphysboro, and his brother Anton came to the Chester store, staying until 1907 when brother Frank came to take over. He bought and moved to 987 State Steet some time between 1907 and 1917. In 1954 the business was sold to Lawrence Montroy who remained in that location until the fall of 1969 when he moved to 1201 Swanwick Street.



Schroeder's
Furniture Store

16.

As far back as I can remember, Chester has always had a Katz Store. I quote, in part, from the Chester Herald Tribune of May 27, 1938: "As a poor immigrant boy from Austria, Mr. Max Katz landed in New York on May 25, 1888, with but little cash and a determination to make himself a home in his adopted country.

"He secured a lodging place among friendly Jews in the Ghetto, New York's Jewish settlement. He soon decided to start out for himself, and, spending his last cent for merchandise which he could peddle, he started out on foot from New York, walking toward Norfolk, Va., where he landed several months later. He stopped at night with friendly farmers along the road and sold merchandise during the day along the route. After a few days in Norfolk, and replenishing his pack, he started on southwest peddling through Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and finally landed at Mobile. Here he bought a horse and wagon and started north.

"He finally landed in Perry County, Missouri, where he spent some time peddling among the farmers. On Jan. 25, 1891, he crossed the

Mississippi, driving across the ice and landing in Chester.

"For a year he peddled in Randolph County and finally decided to open a store in Chester. His first store was in a building about where Hirsches' store is now. The business was under the name of Katz and Hamm until 1895 when Mr. Hamm sold out to Mr. Katz who took in J. M. Tindall who remained in the firm until 1899.



Max Katz at Montroy's Barber Shop

"In 1898 the store moved to 989 State Street where it became known far and wide. Mr. Katz carried a line of men's clothing of the very finest. It was in this store that my son Fred Huffstutler learned to know what fine fabrics were, as he worked there while in high school, on Saturdays and summers. At this time Mr. Katz's son Marcus was associated with him.

"In 1911 Mr. Katz opened a second store on Water Street near the Missouri-Pacific depot. This was operated by an older son Harry for about 25 years. Then the two stores merged. For a short time Marcus and his wife using the adjoining building, added ladies' accessories.

"Harry was just 16 years old when he took charge of the store on the levee, and part of that time also operated the St. James Hotel on Water Street. Later with his wife Henrietta they operated a ladies' ready-to-wear store in his own building at 1029 State Street which he later sold to P. N. Hirsch.

"During an interview with a reporter from the Herald-Tribune Mr. Max Katz said, 'I have many friends in Chester and vicinity who have stuck by me all these years. I am grateful to them for their business and friendships and want to thank them, every one.' At the time of this interview in 1938, Mr. Katz was celebrating his 46th year in business here and the 50th anniversary of his coming to America.

"Mr. Katz was married in 1891 to Rose Goldstein of St. Louis, and they located at Chester the next year. They raised a family of four children, all of whom have been highly respected citizens of this city.

"All of them eventually left Chester except Harry. He loves his home

town and the people who live here. Like his father, he said, in a 1965 edition of the Herald-Tribune, 'Chester and the people in it have been good to me and my family, and I appreciate it.'

"In 1935 he became a real estate broker maintaining an office on the second floor of his building at 1029 State Street. He was elected Mayor of Chester in 1949 and re-elected for another term in 1953, serving from 1949-1957.

"During his term of office and even before that, Harry became concerned about the inequitable burden of real estate taxes levied for the support of local government, county, city and the public school system. As an added source of city revenue, Harry negotiated an arrangement with the Magnolia Pipe Line Company whereby the pipeline company paid \$25,000 for a franchise to hang a 20" pipe line on the bridge at an annual rental of \$15,000.

"That was the beginning of a new source of non-real estate tax money as a source of funds which met the increased cost of city government. The citizens of Chester can thank Harry Katz for first establishing this concept which has resulted in the elimination of the real estate tax for corporate purposes.

"This is just one of the projects Harry has helped promote for the good of our city and now, at age 75, he is still interested in the community. Chester is very fortunate to have had the Katz family for so many years with their interest in the building of a good city. They have all been good citizens and Harry and Henrietta are still working at it. They are fine people, ever ready to help when needed. They are not only my good neighbors, but my friends of many years.



Bill Schuchert, owner of old Opera House, in front of Wiebusch Saloon, now Wittenbrink's Tavern.

"In 1937 Oscar Wittenbrink bought the tavern at 995 State Street from Louis Boettcher. In the old days it was for many years the Wiebusch Saloon with their home adjoining the west side at the back, leaving a nice front yard. Mr. Wittenbrink first remodeled the second story of the tavern with a large apartment in the front for his family and others for rental. He then removed the house and in that space, built the store building that later

became the Ben Franklin Store. It was first opened under the management of M. J. Boettcher who operated it for a short time. Since then several managers have come and gone Mr. William H. McDonald is there at the present time.

Oscar operated the tavern for many years, after his death H. A. Boxdorfer, a son-in-law, took over the management for awhile, then he sublet the business.

17.



Chester Opera House

I have a story to tell concerning the Chester Opera House located at 1001 and 03 State Street, with its early history, activities and the involvement of many people, some of whom later became famous—especially Elzie Segar, creator of Popeye.

My first acquaintance with this building was in early 1893 when I visited my Grandmother Maxwell and Aunt Ellen Walsh, a seamstress, who lived in the long house in its backyard. The house faced toward downtown with a portico extending its full length. A low board fence separated the two buildings giving each a small yard. This house was part of the Opera House property.

In March that same year, when I was five years old, my father died during the summer. Mother obtained a renter for the farm on Kaskaskia Island and we moved to Chester, living almost one year with my Grandmother and Aunt Ellen in this house until Mother could arrange for buying a home.

The double stairway entrance to the theatre which was located on the second floor, was in the back of the building—reached from the front by outside wide brick-paved walks on each side, so I really had a box-seat at all times and saw much of the theatrical world and local celebrities going in and out of the theatre in this one year.

I remember, and earlier history refers to it, as one of the popular centers of cultural entertainment and pleasure for the people of Chester

and surrounding area. There were extravaganzas by local drama clubs, stock companies of high repute, many of them coming for a week's stand; concerts by one of the three Schuchert Bands; local parties by written invitation with Mrs. Weibusch next door serving them in her own private dining room; many home talent programs, dancing, both public and clubs, skating rink, silent movies, then the talking pictures.

The interior of the theatre was very elegant with large stage equipped with drop curtain, stage scenery and plenty of dressing room behind, with a piano off-stage. Chairs were used and the seating capacity was about 350. Two large stoves in the front corners heated the building. The stairway came up in the center of the floor with a closed railing around three sides while in the back of the hall was a most gracefully curved balcony which extended forward on both sides. There were two store rooms on the first floor, one occupied by the Sigmund Aszmann Grocery and the other by the Louis Heitman Drug Co. Later the Ervin Aszmann Shoe Store replaced it.

All of this was made possible by the coming of John F. W. Schuchert from Germany to America in 1848. His wife had died leaving him with two sons, John F. and William J. He brought William J., then 16 years old, with him, leaving him in New Orleans while he proceeded to Chester to locate. Then his son joined him here. William J. clerked for \$10 per month and at the end of the year had saved enough money to return to Germany and bring his brother John F., then 12 years old, back with him in 1849.

In October 1851, John F. W. bought some property on State Street in Buena Vista containing a saloon and black smith shop with a long house behind it. This property was where the Chester Opera House now stands and he and his sons lived in the long house behind it.

Both boys were store clerks, retail grocers and general merchantizers. William J. finally became proprietor of a store in which business he remained. I have told more of William J. in another story of my "I Remember Series." John F. was a wholesale grocer for a few years in Ste. Genevieve, Mo., where he had a serious accident while driving—being dragged quite a distance by a horse. Not having the medical aids that are available today, after a long illness, he was left a partial cripple, using a cane the rest of his life. After this he returned to Chester. His first marriage was to Elizabeth Hoppe Feb. 15, 1856. She died May 6, 1862. One son, John William, ("Ou Bill") came from this marriage. In March 18, 1863, John F. married Seletha Ford and from this marriage two sons and two daughters came.

John G. built the elegant Opera House in 1875, was proprietor and projector operator and he owned several other buildings used for various purposes. Between 1870 and 1875 he built and lived at 1158 George Street until 1911. This house is now owned by Wilbur Saak. John F.'s children from the second marriage were Dr. C. E. Schuchert with dental offices in Red Bud and Cape Girardeau. He had a band in Red Bud. William J. and John F. each had bands in Chester. John F. Jr., whose business was that of manager to Theatre artists lived with his wife in the little long house behind the Opera House where his son Ernest Fred was born in 1892. Alice married Holman Deen and lived in Cape Girardeau, Mo. Mollie spent the greater part of her life in the theater. She had her beginning here with local drama

clubs, then with traveling stock companies, playing many times at the Opera House. In 1899 she went to New York for study where she stayed in the theater until the advent of the movies—then on to Hollywood where she probably did not reach her expectations. She returned home to the Cape in 1932 and remained there until her death in 1951.

John F. also owned a theater in Cape Girardeau where he operated with booking offices there, leaving the management in Chester to his son John William (Bill) who had grown up in the business with him here. Bill wore a mustache, was rather chubby, good natured, jovial as well as exceptionally friendly, which made for a good host at all times. He always had some tall tale to tell and was often called "Windy Bill." He was especially nice to all the children and often gave them nicknames. I remember a comic strip called "The Feinheimer Twins." There happened to be two young brothers about seven and nine years old who lived near the Opera House and were usually in attendance. Bill named them his "Feinheimer Twins" and, although the admission for children was five cents, the twins went in for just one nickel. Bill's "Feinheimer Twines" were none other than Henry and Willie Juergens.

Bill's most popular trait was his love for hamburgers. These were usually bought at the Weibusch Saloon next door or at the Ed Middendorf Confectionary across the street where Cooks' Service Station now stands. Sometimes they went up to the George Gozney's Saloon, now known as the Eggemeyer Tavern. A pair of Shetland ponies, Babe and Lucille, hitched to a buggy, was Bill's mode of transportation. He lived with his wife Liz and daughter Pettie Ida in a large frame house on Harrison Street overlooking the river. His wife Liz was good-hearted and full of fun, but a personality all her very own. She seldom left the house except to go to the Opera House and when she did grace the hall with her presence, her air of dignity and elegance gained the respect of all who saw her. She always wore a black wrapper made of a soft challie fabric. The bodice was fitted with a lining, having two double box plaits extending from the neck down the front and back. These were held at the waistline by a wide black satin ribbon tied in the front. With this she wore a small black bonnet-shaped hat with a small plume on the back of her head—much like my grandmother's.

My Aunt Ellen made these wrappers for her and I often managed to be present when she came for a fitting because I loved to hear her talk. One day Bill must have given her a hard time because she was in a bad mood when she came and this is what she said: "When I die, I want to be buried in black from the skin out because my life has been so dam black." I'm sure she changed her mind about this, because many years later I saw pink lingerie flying in the breeze from her clothes line.

She also smoked a small Sub Rosa cigar and was never without them, because she carried the small box in the bosom of her wrapper. You may think this queer, but it seemed a part of her personality. She often brought her bulldog Bobbie on a leash to the movie. He would sit quietly on a chair beside her and help her eat popcorn. She often sat with him near one of the stoves in cold weather.

During my employment at the theater about 1908 at the time of silent movies, the personnel consisted of Mr. Schuchert, manager; three young lads, Ted Mueller and Red Faverty who were the projector operators,

and Elzie Segar who played drums with either Vida Spurgeon of Ellis Grove or myself at the piano. Occasionally Elzie would have a rest period and go to the projection room and Red would permit him to operate the projector.

At that time the reel had to be rewound before the next picture could be shown. Elzie used his creative ability by making slides to be thrown on the screen during this period. Often he used local people and events for this cartoon. For one such slide he used a local young man knocking on the door, calling on his girlfriend. Of course, everyone knew who the young man was because he made the face to look just like him.

After the evening performance it was Elzie's duty to go to the several bulletin boards located at various places in the area and change the poster for the next performance. He had as his assistant a small neighborhood boy with a little red wagon to haul the posters. This boy was Brother Gollon.



1912 – Joe Gollon and wagon. He helped Elzie Segar put up show posters. Picture taken in front of Max Katz store.

When the theatrical troupes arrived in town there was always much excitement and plenty of work, because in order to get their trunks to the second floor it was necessary to tie ropes around them and pull them up the steps. They didn't always carry a piano player with them. Then I was called.

I never knew what I'd find in the music line. Some of it was badly worn and very often manuscript which was not easy to read, but at that time if I had the melody and time signature, I could usually fill in to suit the song and dance routines without much difficulty. It was often necessary to mend the music before using it. There was always a parade in the afternoon advertising the play—led by the Schuchert Cornet Band. For the silent movies my choices of music varied. I used popular, ragtime and semi-classic. For a typical Theda Bara love story, I often used "The Flower Song" by Gustav Lang. Momment 1 was the love scene; 2, a small quarrel; 3, all peaceful again; 4, brought the villain (or other lover) with a

stormy scene. She pleads with him and he storms out; 5, peace is again restored and all ends well. For a quiet pastoral scene picture with some exciting moments, I sometimes used "Longing for Home." This number was tuneful and easy to adapt to calm or excitement by changing the tempo at times to fit the picture. Elzie was a real artist in making these changes with me.

For a Western picture where they might be a cattle roundup or horses traveling fast at times, I liked to use "The Turkish Patrol." This fitted the mood of the cowboys as well as the cattle and was easily adaptable to their movements. On Saturday evening we always had "The Perils of Pauline" and sometimes I used "Waves of the Oceans." This was a gallop and seemed to fit Pauline's many mishaps which kept us on the edges of our chairs. Being a serial she was always left hanging from a cliff or in some other precarious position for us to worry about the entire week.



Home of Mr. and Mrs. Amzi Segar near the city steps.

Elzie Crisler Segar lived with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Amzi Segar, near the City Steps at the north end of Harrison Street, having moved there from the farm. His father was an interior decorator and was anxious for Elzie to help him and to follow this vocation. But Elzie would have none of that. As a lad he was shy, very quiet and frail. His eyes were large but very soft and I could see kindness in them. He often smiled quietly when we played soft music. His spare time was spent in drawing and I shall always remember the wide brimmed straw hat he wore in summer.

He soon became poster artist and projector operator at the Opera House, submitted an early drawing to the St. Louis Post Dispatch without success, took mail order lessons financed by Bill Schuchert and finally landed a Chicago newspaper job and began doing "Thimble Theatre" for King Features in 1919. But it was not until he created Popeye in 1929 that he became famous and his annual income reached \$100,000. He created Popeye because Caster and Olive Oyl needed a sailor to take them on an ocean trip and from then on, he just ran away with the comic. Popeye

appeared in the St. Louis Post Dispatch for the first time June 15, 1931.

As other whimsical characters such as J. Wellington Wimpy, the hamburger-loving fight referee were introduced to suport the new star of "Thimble Theatre" it became syndicated in 500 newspapers. The cartoon continued after Segar's death in 1938, probably with the same artist who drew it during his long illness.

Segar loved his home town and studied the characteristics of many of the people, and from these experiences, came ideas for some of his characters. I feel sure that "Thimble Theatre" was so named from memories of his associations and experiences at the Opera House.

The hamburger-loving Wimpy was his own beloved former manager of the Opera House, Bill Schuchert, and I have been told that Olive Oyl was Mrs. Pascal, the wife of a former businessman downtown near the court house. Popeye was Rocky Feigle, a Polish young man who lived with his mother and sister near the Evergreen Cemetery. He was tall, strong, always ready for a fight and always a winner. One day five local boys decided to gang up on him and in that way, win the battle, but when they all appeared, and the fight started—in a very short time Rocky had whipped three of them and the other two couldn't be found. They had disappeared. Rocky worked part-time at the George Gozney Saloon on State Street—now known as Eggemeyer's Tavern. When Rocky had finished his work and a couple of beers in his stomach, he would take a chair out front, seat himself, tilt the chair back, and, with pipe in his mouth, proceed to take a nap in the sunshine.

Day after day my brothers, Elzie Segar and several other boys would take the long road home from school in order to pass Gozney's place, and if Rocky was still sleeping, they would creep near, yell loudly and run. Of course, Rocky would rouse quickly from his slumber, come out of his chair with arms flying in all directions, ready for a fight, but by that time, the boys would be a block away. Strange to say, he never lost his pipe.

As years passed, promoters tried to persuade Rocky to make personal appearance tours, but he wasn't interested. A business man in Chester told me that at one time checks came regularly to Rocky from Segar. This man saw the checks.

Segar died in 1938 at the age of 44 years. The Sunday Post Dispatch of Oct. 23, 1938 carried a full page in the Rotogravure section with an account of his life, death, and a parade of his characters including Geezil, Roughhouse, Wimpy, Poopdeck Pappy, Caster, Olive Oyl, Popeye, Sweet Pea, The Jeep, Sea Hag, Alice the Goon, and Toar.

In 1908 John F. Schuchert died in Cape Girardeau at the age of 71 years. Services were held in Chester and the Chester Schuchert Cornet Band led the cortege to the Evergreen Cemetery, playing for the service, as he would have wished.

Through the settlement of the estate John William (Bill) acquired the Opera House and continued the program there with his assistants, Ted Mueller and Jesse Fleming. In 1915 the back entrance of the Opera House was closed, being replaced by a fire escape and a closed front stairway-entrance built on the north side of the building adjoining the one then occupied by the Lilburn Perry Dry Goods Store, now Daniel's Store. In the late 20's, I was again at the piano taking turns with Margaret Heuer.

Movies improved and business continued as usual until Bill's death in 1941. Walter Light with the assistance of Jess Fleming carried on there for approximately 12 years and then the Joy Theatre was built and they moved there.

Jess Fleming bought the Opera House building later, renting the upper floor for the shoe factory union hall and using the lower floor for his own electrical business until his death. Later his wife made the hall into three modern apartments as we see it today with Mode-O-Day and Jim Frazer's Furniture occupying the two rooms below.

The name Schuchert has from the very early days, held an important place in the development and history of Chester. They pioneered early and were men of push and ambition, ready with voice and purse to aid any good undertaking, discharging any assigned duty with great credit to themselves and their adopted city. And because of their generosity and concern for other people, the talents of Elzie Segar were developed and through the creation of Popeye, brought fame to their beloved city.

18.

According to history, business on the corner of 1005 State Street at Light Street began prior to the Civil War with a small building in which John Floreth with sons William and Jake Jr. operated a store including hardware, farm machinery and a tin shop. This was in the days when tin cans were made for home canning of fruit, vegetables, etc. Mr. Floreth was an itinerant preacher and this being more to his liking, soon left the store to his two sons. Jake Jr. sold his partnership to Chris Weinrich, a young man who, after serving two years in the Civil War, came from Longtown, Mo., to learn the blacksmith trade under Fred Rebbe Sr., whose shop was in the 1400 block of Swanwick Street where wagons were also made. The store now was under the name of Weinrich and William Floreth.

Herman Rebbe (Alfred's father) began working for them in 1873 at the age of 14, and since they also had a store under the hill, worked one half-day at each store. In the early 80's Mr. Weinrich bought William's share and became the sole owner.

The brick building at the back was the stable where the wagon and horses were kept. About 1899 when Mr. Weinrich decided to build a new building, all things were moved to the stable and operations went on as usual from there.

The new store was large, consisting of two rooms on the first floor and complete second floor which was used for the tin shop. Mr. Weinrich took the east room, renting the west room to Lilburn Perry who operated a dry goods store for many years with the help of Fred H. Boeger and Jeenie Maxwell who later became Mrs. Fred Boeger. When Mr. Weinrich died, Mr. Rebbe managed the store for his sister, Mrs. Chris Weinrich, and, at her death, the two sons Fred and Herman acquired the business and building. Together they operated the business for several years. Then Fred died and later Herman's health caused him to close the store.

At Mr. Perry's death his business was bought by Henry Burns, then later Harry and Henrietta Katz with a ladies' ready-to-wear shop operated here until they moved into their own building where the Hirsch store is now.

Then the Perry Location became Daniel's Store with Kenneth Pautler managing first, Clarence Nordmeyer, second, and Hubert Frazer, third. Hubert joined the Daniel staff in 1939, first working with Mr. Nordmeyer. At his leaving in 1942 Hubert became manager. In 1957 the Koeneman Agency bought the building, later remodeled the inside to be used as one room, and since 1960 Daniels have occupied the entire floor. It is interesting to know that the brick stable was repaired on the outside, paneled inside, and made into offices by the Koenemans. As of this month, Daniel's Store will close and Hubert take a position at Carter's, now owned by Clarence Nordmeyer.

The Schroeder Furniture Store was established in 1865 by Mr. Schroeder, "No. 1." This was long before my time. Three generations followed whom I did know. Herman Schroeder "No. 2" was a man of much dignity and poise. When he conducted a service using the large hearse and the beautiful black horses, it was really something to behold. They had a black vehicle with two seats lengthwise used for carrying the pallbearers. I remember on Memorial Day each year it carried the singers for the service at the cemetery. I was usually one of them. We always called it the "Black Maria."

Oscar "No. 3" was very much like his father in the way he conducted a service in his quiet efficient manner. His son Bob was "No. 4" in operating the business. The family home of Mr. Herman was behind the store on Swanwick Street. It was a stately two-story brick with a beautiful yard and trees. Here the family was raised. Lillian became a teacher and married Dr. Torrence. Jerry was in the undertaking business in Du Quoin a long time. Hugo became a doctor of medicine. Ella lived in Du Quoin and another sister, I think, in West Frankfort. The home still stands but has been made into apartments. When Bob sold the business in 1965, it was 100 years old, under the same family management. Since then it has been under new ownership, managed by Jack McClure, a partner in the business. Mr. McClure joined the Schroeder staff in 1948.

I recall another home and business on Swanwick Street which I often visited. It was the shoe repair shop of a wonderful man, Mr. Hupfer. His work bench always interested me. It was rather pear-shaped to allow him to sit astride of it with the large part in front for his work table.

Next to the Schroeder building was the William Stahlberg home and jewelry store which later was bought by Tony DuRoche. John Paulus and his restaurant came next. He made the best vegetable soup in town and introduced Chester to Bond Bread. These have all been replaced by the Katz building occupied now by Schuerens and the Hirsch Store. Offices and apartments are on the second floor. Mr. and Mrs. Ervin Schueren with Ladies' ready-to-wear and shoes were for 15 years located in the Opera House building and at their present location eight years. The Hirsch Store has been here since 1935 when they bought the Katz business and is now a department store since the alteration inside made possible the use of the basement.

There has been a Montroy Barber Shop in Chester for 71 years in the same block. It began with Theodore Montroy purchasing a shop in 1928 from August Schroeder on State Street in an old building that stood where the Hirsch Store now stands. His second location was 1031 State Street.

The Herald-Tribune printed an article in the paper in 1942 when Mr. Montroy had then, at age 72, completed 44 years as the active head of his business, not only setting an all-time record for length of business in Chester, but there was not another single merchant in business in 1898, who was still active head of his business.

His son, Paul, came into the business with him in 1917 and another son Joseph, in 1922. At one time they had a very active business with four chairs. Many people will remember Clark Maxwell at one of these chairs. In April, 1959, Mr. Theodore died and Paul, in 1965.

Joseph continued operating the business in the same location until July, 1967, when he sold the building and moved across the street to 1006 State Street, originally the office of Dr. Aszmann. A beauty shop now is located in his old location.

As of this date Joseph Montroy has been in business in Chester for 47 years. Like his father he has watched the hair of some of his customers change to gray and then to white—and some that gradually disappeared. He also went through the period when women invaded the barbershop for clipped necks and bobbed hair. He was also in business when shaving mugs and the Police Gazette gradually did a disappearing act under the counter, and the shop ceased to be man's exclusive domain as they were gradually pushed out of their loafing place. He proudly says he is the oldest in service of any businessman in Chester.

The next building at 1033 State has served many different businesses through the years until the Boonshaft Department Store came and stayed about 25 years. Since 1952 Mr. and Mrs. Martin Epstein, who carry a nice line of ladies' and children's wear, have been with us.

The last business on this block was the Schemer Grocery where the best coffee in town could be bought. Mr. Schemer with his mother and two sisters, lived above the store. I have been told that some of the neighborhood girls were rather bothersome at times, going into the store with their pennies for candy.

Since Mr. Schemer was a patient man he quietly waited until their choice was made. After this business transaction they asked to be weighed on the big scale that stood far back in the store where there was no light. He would light a candle and then take them all back and weigh them one by one. He never once complained even though he knew they would repeat the performance the next day. Martha White offices now occupy this space.

19.

Once upon a time Buena Vista had a beautiful little park—Swanwick Street on the north, Stacey on the east, State on the south, and Cheapside on the west. It really was the pride of Chester. Corner crosswalks went through it with a band stand in the center, and on the well-kept lawn, many green benches were placed.

It was used for all outdoor activities such as public addresses, band concerts each week and ice cream festivals which at that time were very popular with the churches. And the ice cream was home made. This not only put money in their treasury, but promoted fellowship for the public.

I remember when the Catholic ladies took their large freezers which

they turned by hand and had a hey-day behind the blacksmith shop of Mr. Kuntz, as they took turns turning the freezers. When it was finished they packed salt on the ice to stand until ready for use.

On the northwest corner of the park was a low rock wall where the freezers were placed for serving so that the salt water could drain outside and not kill the grass.

The park was well lighted on the inside plus the corner street lamps that shed their beams through the many green trees around and inside the park. Shoppers stepped in their cooling shade to rest awhile and visit with others of the same mind. It was a quiet, peaceful little park where one could sit alone and think over the daily problems and feel the better for having been there awhile on a hot day.

Candidates used this atmosphere to expound their theories and make political promises when they were seeking an office. There have been great men and lesser men who spoke from that platform, but it was all part of the life of that day.

One day a visit came—in the form of progress, and our little park bowed its head to the inevitable.



Site of old city park and ground being broken for shoe factory building in 1916.

In 1916 the International Shoe factory was opened which supplied work for many Chester people and the surrounding area. The building was placed on the Swanwick Street side facing State Street, using only part of the ground. The office wing extended from the center front with a walk to the street. Flower beds were placed on either side, some shaped to represent a certain name brand of shoe made by International such as "Diamond Brand," etc.

Later the building was extended to State Street. I quote from the St. Louis Globe-Democrat of May 31, 1953: "At the present time 800 persons are employed here who turn out 7600 pairs of shoes daily." After 45 years of service in Chester, International closed its doors and moved this department from Chester.

Donald Welge while president of the Gilster Milling Company operating in Chester and Steeleville, started the original Gilster Cake Mix Plant at the Steeleville Mill, and in 1962, combined with Martha White

who maintain their headquarters in Nashville, Tenn. The shoe factory and the former knitting mill buildings were converted into a cake mix plant where Donald was president of the Gilster Division of the Martha White Corporation. He has seen it grow from a relatively small organization to more than 400 employees in Chester and Steepleville. As of November, 1969, Donald resigned from the corporation and is no longer a member of Gilster-Martha White of Chester. Martha White will continue in Chester.

About 1920 Mr. Joshua Richman moved his small knitting mill from lower Chester to his new building in Buena Vista at Swanwick and Stacey Streets. Again I quote from the St. Louis Globe Democrat, May 31, 1935: "At the present time Prim Hosiery Incorporated is rather new in Chester, but they now have 250 employees who manufacture an average of 14,000 pairs of women's stockings per day.

Behind the knitting mill and across High Street on the west side of No. 1111 stands a house that I remember as the "Little Brick School House." My brothers and I attended this school for the first and second grades, as did all public school children living in Ward Three. Miss Fannie Whitehead was the teacher for many, many years. Miss Fannie was kind, gentle, and an exceptional teacher for small children. I remember her as being able to settle all school ground problems without force, and the holiday programs of recitations and songs were always a delight. Miss Fannie was loved greatly by all. She was also my piano teacher.



J. Rickman knitting mill in background and J. M. Wright Drugs, Now Montroy's Jewelers.

Around the corner at 228 West Stacey now we find the Sickmeyer Chiropractics Center located in the John Ahrens home. At the corner of Stacey and Swanwick now Laurence Montroy has his jewelry store. When I was just a little girl, on the corner was Mr. John Wright's drugstore and had been for many years. There were several girls in the family, and usually one or more helped their father in the store. I remember best Hazel (Mrs. Fonrose Jones). Later Mr. Michaelis took over the corner and was in the drug business for many years. After his death, Walter, his son, carried on for a while, and at his leaving, the drugstore corner was no more.

The Dial building is vacant. Sylvan's health became such that it necessitated his retirement after many years of service to the community.

Benson's and Connie Walter's take care of the men's needs. Connie is an old timer in this block. The Frager building is occupied by the Liberty Loan Co.

Dan Piosik's Tavern and Restaurant at 1205 Swanwick has been at its present location since 1930, having started across the street two years before. Dan and Fannie first, then Fannie left for other work, and Charlie joined Dan, and together they have served the public all these years. As I talked with Dan about these many years, he said, "I've had it. I'm ready to retire and be able to sit under a big tree in the shade and dream, bringing back old memories—forty-one years is enough."

The Western Auto and Brelig's Shoe Store have given special service for several years, as did Reinhardt Jewelers until it recently came under new management, Frey's Jewelry Company.

Through four generations and 98 years one store in this block carried the Gilster name. L. H. Gilster was the third generation in 1913 with groceries, dry goods and shoes. In those days there was no mail delivery, so the uptown mail was sent to this store and delivered from boxes which Mr. Gilster provided.

In 1927 Karl Gilster, the fourth generation, and Albert Welge, his brother-in-law, bought the store from Mr. L. H. and they added a meat department. Over a period of years remodeling was done three times. Carl and Albert sold out in 1954. Then Mr. Sol Vines opened a department store.

Dr. B. E. Gilster still has his dental office upstairs. He opened his first office in the First National Bank Building in March, 1919, and in 1922 moved to his present location where he has spent 47 of his 50 years in business, and he still works part of each day.

20.

"Opposite our little park across Stacey Street at the corner of State, a small office building appeared about 1875. Beside it, but set back far enough to allow for a front yard was a house, and behind this, a barn. This was the home and office of Dr. William Robert Mackenzie, who had moved to Chester from Kaskaskia after five years of service there.

This being horse-and-buggy days, a well-groomed horse and buggy were housed in the barn, ready for service at any time. No night was ever too dark, cold or stormy for the doctor to drive miles in the country to relieve a seriously ill patient or to deliver a baby.

I don't know when the doctor bought and moved his family to the beautiful brick home on George Street which had been built by the Hallbrook family. Here they reared their children with the help of Anna Kloss as nurse, maid, and companion. The doctor never moved his office, but sometimes he would have a boy drive with him on long trips and often the boy lived with the family, so as to be there for night drives. As a lad William (Boe) Born had this experience for awhile. The doctor was loved and held in high esteem by all who knew him, and, like our little park, he and his small office were a part of Chester until his death April 24, 1923, at the age of 79 years. As of this date, 1970, both sons who had become

successful physicians, are deceased, and Adeline lives in Los Angeles, Calif. The large stained glass window in the front of the First United Methodist Church with the names of Dr. and Mrs. William R. MacKenzie was given by them.

The following sketch of the doctor's life was taken from the book "Portrait and Biographical Record of Randolph, Monroe, Perry and Jackson Counties" published in 1894 by the Biographical Publishing Company:

Dr. William Robert MacKenzie was of Scottish parentage. His grandfather Alexander MacKenzie Sr. was born in the Highlands of Scotland, and his father Alexander MacKenzie Jr. in Nova Scotia.

Dr. William R. MacKenzie was born Feb. 15, 1844, in Churchville, Pictou County, Nova Scotia. He was the eighth child in order of birth with five brothers and four sisters. One brother Alexander G. at one time resided in Chester, but four sisters lived within a radius of four miles from the old homestead.

William's education was secured in the village schools of his native place where he afterward became a teacher. He spent his boyhood days on the old home farm in Nova Scotia which was a stopping place of all the preachers of the United Presbyterian Church, and he was reared under the influence of the sturdy old Covenanters.

In 1865 he came to the United States, landing in Boston with the hope of pursuing the study of medicine. Soon after arrival he contacted measles, and after a month's illness, through improper treatment, suffered a relapse. By the time of recovery his money was spent.

Through the newspaper advertisements he acquired a position of collectorship for a gas fitting company. Being a Nova Scotian was, in Boston, a sufficient recommendation for his honesty, and no bond was required. After a few months he met William Tidd, a leather merchant with a business on Pearl Street and one in Stoneham, Mass., where William was assigned a position. Here he met fellow countryman named McLeid who induced him to embark on a fishing expedition to the Grand Banks. Fitted out at Cape Cod, the vessel proceeded to Grand Banks and began operations. It was an old schooner which soon began to leak, and it became necessary to abandon it. Everything of value was looted by the rest of the fleet. She was fired and set adrift. Each man had his own dory. William and his partner were taken on board a schooner from Cape Breton Island of which Captain Doolan was in command.

After five months on the Atlantic without sight of land, they decided to head homeward. They ran into a storm which they fought for two weeks and finally anchored safely in the harbor of Provincetown. To William's surprise Captain Doolan presented him with \$80 in gold.

During William's absence, his brother Alexander who had previously come to the United States, was by then a prosperous miner in Nevada. He sent him a draft for \$100 to assist him in pursuing his medical studies. This letter was returned, and he was thought dead by his brother until communication was later resumed, and money again forwarded.

William, bronzed by life at sea of which he had had enough, secured a position with M. M. Peyser and Company on Water Street, Boston, where

he remained until February 1867, when he went to Sparta, Ill., and studied medicine, and also recited in Greek and Latin to Rev. Mr. Stuart.

Shortly afterwards he entered the medical department of the University of Michigan from which he was graduated March 30, 1870. After weeks at Grass Lake assisting E. R. Chapin, M. D., his preceptor, he came to Illinois for the practice of his profession, locating in Kaskaskia. After remaining there for five years he moved to Chester where he was in continual practice ever since.

A leader in his profession, the doctor holds a prominent place in many of the principal societies thereof. He was a member of the Southern Illinois Medical Society, Illinois State Medical Society, the St. Louis Medical Society, and Tri-State Medical Society (Ind., Ill., Ky.), and later, the Mississippi Valley Medical Society.

He was also a delegate to the International Medical Congress which met in Washington D. C. in 1887. During the course of this meeting he was a guest of the American Medical Editors at a banquet given for the foreign medical editors. He was a representative of the Illinois State Board of Health at a meeting of the Sanitary Council of the Mississippi Valley which was held in the city of New Orleans in March, 1885.

At the meetings of the Southern Illinois Medical Society he usually had one or more papers on topics of interest. At the meeting of the organization in Jan., 1880, he read a paper which was afterwards published in the St. Louis Medical and Surgical Journal from which it was copied, translated and published in the Paris Medical Journal of Paris, France.

On June 15, 1883, Dr. MacKenzie was appointed a member of the Illinois State Board of Health by Gov. John M. Hamilton to succeed Dr. J. N. Gregory who had resigned. He was continued in office by the appointment of Gov. W. Fifer on May 28, 1889. He served as secretary of said board from July 3 until Dec. 31, 1891.

Near the close of Fifer's term, Doctor sent in his resignation which was not accepted until May 10, 1893, several months after the accession of Gov. Altgeld to the executive chair, thus giving Doctor 10 years in this important position.

At the meetings for examination of candidates for license to practice medicine his questions have been highly commended for their thoroughness, comprehensiveness and elementary character. July 15, 1885, during Cleveland's first administration, Doctor was appointed by Commissioner J. C. Black to the Board of United States Examining Surgeons at Chester and was reappointed by Commissioner Tanner under Harrison's administration. At the organization of said Board in 1885 he was elected secretary in which capacity he served until his resignation on Dec. 7, 1893, a term of eight years.

For 15 years he was surgeon for the Wabash, Chester and Western Railroad Company, and his thorough knowledge of surgery rendered the company invaluable service. He held this position under three successive managements of the road. On May 17, 1875, Dr. MacKenzie married Miss Nellie M., daughter of Dr. William A. and Adeline S. Gordon of Chester. Five children were born to this union—three at this time are living: William A., 16; Robert G., 12; and Adeline E., 7 years old.

Socially Dr. MacKenzie was a member of the Blue Lodge Chapter

and Council of the Masonic Fraternity of Chester, the Commandery of Knights Templar of Centralia, and the Chester Lodge and Encampment of Independent Order of Odd Fellows. He was a Presbyterian, as are most of his race, while Mrs. MacKenzie is a member of the Methodist-Episcopal Church of Chester.

No more appropriate closing of this sketch could be made than to quote what has before been written of him by one who has known him for years. It is as follows: Dr. William R. MacKenzie was a careful and indefatigable student of his profession and attained a high reputation for learning among his fellow practitioners in Illinois and Missouri. He has an extensive and lucrative practice and is one of the most highly esteemed citizens of Chester. The same ability that placed him in the front ranks of his profession was always at the service of the community in which he lived for the promotion of meritorious enterprises. He was for nine years a member of the Board of Education of Chester and President of that body for two terms. In his social relations, Dr. MacKenzie was as popular as he was successful in his profession.

21.

Forty-seven years ago Morris Frager and brothers Hyman, Max, and Sam were in the dress manufacturing business in St. Louis at 927 Washington Avenue. Morris, wanting to live in a small town, came to Chester and bought the Chester Supply Company business from Sam Wiel who had previously bought it and desired to return to St. Louis. The Fragers continued the general store and soon bought the building from Mrs. St. Vrain.

Being interested in Buena Vista they soon bought from Knapp and Gant the property owned by them at Stacey and Swanwick Streets. This consisted of the western half of that block excluding the Buena Vista Bank building and the Ford building. Knapp and Gant had moved Dr. MacKenzie's office over and built the Ford display room on the corner in 1916. Warfield Smith had been using the doctor's office for his print shop and continued in that business after it was moved. There was also a store building on the Stacey side operated by the Berry brothers.

On the Swanwick side just one building was there, that which the Jolley TV Company now occupies, and at the alley way a filling station, and, of course, the Buena Vista Bank Building of which I will tell in another story.

Mr. Frager first erected the small building where the Chester Cab Station is now, for a candy shop to be occupied by a man from St. Louis. Next he built the Children's Store and just 25 years ago the Ladies Store thus making all of the Fragers' business now in Buena Vista. He then remodeled the filling station at the alley way for a doughnut shop which is still operating and is a popular place for the business men's morning coffee break. On the Stacey side he removed the office and built the drug store with five apartments above. Huch Rexall now occupies the drug store.

The Fragers have always been interested in the older Chester homes, having early bought the Roberts home on Young Avenue which they restored for their own home. From here they have enjoyed the river view for many years. The home contains a tower room which I've been told was Mr.

Harry's library.

They then bought and restored the Harmer home next door which they have made into apartments. They next bought and demolished the old Judge Hartzell home next door which added to the beauty of the neighborhood. The home originally belonging to Mrs. Jessie James Nisbet on the north side of their own home was then bought and made into two apartments. At the back entrance of this lot was added a wrought iron fence with gate which added much to the attractiveness of the place. Another old home restored by Bud Frager is the old Bauman home at 1209 Swanwick. Where Benson's Men's Store is now located was Mr. Bauman's general store, and the S. E. Dial location was the family lawn. Originally the house had two large dormer windows which had been changed some time earlier. The Michaelis family lived in this house many years when Mr. Michaelis owned and operated the drug store at 1201 Swanwick Street. Bud also restored the former Welten home at 1620 Swanwick, making two lovely modern apartments.

Since Mr. Frager's death Mrs. Frager and Bud have carried on, not only the store, but an extensive building program. Bud built the apartment house on the old Spencer property at 738 State, and his most recent venture was the Mansion House at 743 State. This is an ultra-modern four apartment building.

During an interview recently with Mrs. Frager, she said that her husband always believed in Chester's future, and whenever a depression threatened, was the time he wanted to build.

Besides Bud there are two daughters in the Frager family. Bernice lives in Annandale, Va., and Marion in Carbondale.

The Ford display room built by Knapp and Gant in 1916, later sold to the Siegfrieds, burned in 1924 and was rebuilt by them in 1926. Mr. and Mrs. Victor Veath in 1950 bought the Stoeber paint and paper business located in the former Middendorf building at 1230 Swanwick which they operated there for 10 years. Wishing to expand, they moved in 1960 to the Ford building with son-in-law Allen Witbart as part of the business. Since then fabrics, draperies, patterns and accessories for ladies who sew, have been added and have popularized the program "Do-It-Yourself." Wingerter's Aluminum Shop occupies the basement.

John George Middendorf was born in Hanover, Germany, in 1824. He received his education in his native land as was the custom from age 6 to 14. His father was a merchant tailor. John learned his father's business but left his parental home, landing in the United States at New Orleans on Dec., 1845. He married a German girl who had been in the United States for three years.

After a few years in St. Louis he arrived in Chester in 1851 bringing with him a stock of goods for opening a store. He immediately purchased a residence and business property and opened his store which was the first establishment of its kind in this place. He was very successful and soon added a stock of dry goods making it general merchandise. At one time he was Mayor of Chester.

The property he bought was located at Swanwick and West Holmes Streets which sloped downward to State Street and consisted of the eastern half of the block to the alley where the doughnut shop is now. The store was

a one-story building of two rooms with a rock basement behind where the family lived until the second floor could be added. A small shed was beside the building which was used for storage. On the west was a vacant lot and then a building used as a restaurant or confectionary on the alley corner.

There were nine children in the family, and when the father died in 1888, Herman was already age 21 and helped in the store when not in school, as did the other boys. I remember Herman and Fred in the dry goods department and George in the grocery.

The Middendorf stores operated in this location until 1937 when all the property was sold to William H. Welge, except the building on the alley corner which Mrs. Herman Middendorf bought.

Kenneth Pautler bought the grocery business which was associated with Red and White and on Sept. 17 and 18, 1937, he had his grand opening of a new Red and White Grocery on the corner. On Saturday, the 18th, his guests were invited to see the "The Big Pevely Show" in front of the store with the "Famous Zebra Team" and the "Beautiful White Horse, Lady Pevely, with their Bag of Tricks." Beef roast was quoted at 19 cents a pound, a 24-pound sack of flour, 93 cents, coffee, 20, 25, and 30 cents per pound. Four large cans of Pevely's evaporated milk were priced at 27 cents.

On Sept. 24, 1942, Mr. Pautler had a second grand opening—that of Pautler's IGA Food Store, individually owned, but united operated. This he continued until January, 1967, when the store became Pautler's, Incorporated, with Eric Wagner, Gerhard Brelje and William Brelje as part-owners. This left Kenneth semi-retired, going to the store part-time. In May of that year he died. His loss to the store and to the city have been keenly felt, because his interest in Chester's business was always foremost in his thoughts.

The restaurant or confectionary continued, sometimes operated by one of the Middendorfs, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Hartenberger served the public here for 15 years in this building until they retired about three years ago. We have all missed them, their service, and their good food. Then the Ervin Middendorfs remodeled the building for a cut rate store.

After buying the property, Mr. Welge added two stories above the store for apartments, a business building and apartment on the Swanwick Street side, also the bowling alley. He also removed the wall between the two store rooms, enlarging the Pautler grocery. The rock basement was made into a locker plant. A store building was built on the vacant lot on the west side. Mr. C.G. Walter having bought his uncle's business and moved in 1950 to this new store building which Mr. Welge had just built. He stayed there three years, then sold to Bucklers, a Federated Store, and built and moved to his own building across the street on the corner at 1231 Swanwick, making this a men's clothing and furnishings. Later Mr. Walter built another building at 1225 State for Crawford Electric, and when they moved, Mr. Walter moved to that building and rented the other to Reinhardt Jewelers. For 40 years C. G. Walter has been in business at that end of the block.

Buckler's Federated remained until 1960, then sold to Sherman's, another Federated Store with headquarters in St. Louis.

The bowling alley was operated for many years by Mrs. J. G. Willbrand. The new owner is Mike Cowell.



The corner building which for many years housed the Eggemeyer Tavern was built in 1897, and the Katz Building next to it was constructed in 1929.

As I leave Swanwick Street and begin traveling north of West Holmes Street I see the vacant Eggemeyer Tavern building, formerly the George Gozney Saloon. Here Segar's character Pop Eye had its beginning in the person of Rocky Feagle at the time of his employment for Mr. Gozney. Later Mr. Gozney's office was occupied by Rudy Aszmann for many years with his barbershop. Now Mr. Harold Schopfer has his location. There is also an auto supply house with apartments above the entire building.

Behind this building I remember Dan Colbert's filing station and bus stop. It no longer operates since Dan's death.



Chester Coffee Shop
owned by
Mrs. Marie
Ham. Now
the Texaco
Service Station on
State St.

The St. John Lutheran Church and school are 121 years old and have a very interesting history of continual progress through these years. I quote from their Centennial Publication of 1949:

"As early as 1848 30 Lutheran men, women and children were

reported living in Chester and community. Occasionally they gathered for prayer meetings under the leadership of a Lutheran book agent. From time to time a Methodist missionary by the name of Boeshenz, who was active in Southern Illinois and whose mission activities were related in the "Lutheraner" of Jan. 12, 1849, came to Chester and preached the services for the group.



St. John Lutheran Church

In the fall of 1848 Frederick Allmeyer, a fruit dealer then 19 years old, while in St. Louis on business met and heard Dr. C. F. W. Walter, the great theologian and pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, preach. He reported to his Lutheran friends in Chester that this man's teachings differed from that of the Methodist missionary. In the spring of 1849 they contacted Dr. Walther, and he sent C. H. Siegmund Buttermann as a candidate. He was then a young man, 29 years of age.

Pastor Buttermann immediately organized the St. John congregation of Chester on April 22, 1849. The constitution followed that of Trinity congregation, St. Louis, was accepted in 1843, and with but few minor changes, has served St. John's congregation in Chester throughout the century. The following names were entered as Charter Members: Allmeyer, Gericke, Goehrs, Dettmer, Runge, Brinkman, Bode, Schrader, Wegner, Wiebusch, Roeder, Kipp, Pick, Hirte, Kaufmann and Jostman.

The organization meeting was held in the home of Henry Goehrs on State Street. The pastor lived in this home where services and meetings were held and he taught school in his study. He became a victim of cholera and died after a seven-hour illness on July 12, 1849. He was buried in

Evergreen Cemetery near Gov. Bond's monument. Pastor Michael Eirich was ordained and installed in Chester on September 10, 1849.

The first church was completed in the fall of 1849 at the corner of West Holmes and High Streets. It was 36 feet long, 24 feet wide, 13 feet high. School was held in the basement. Eight years later, in 1857, a 20 foot addition was added to the church. In 1854 the first parsonage was built facing West Holmes Street. The Rev. Mr. Eirich was relieved of his work in the school in 1856, and F. Schachmeyer was employed as the first teacher. In 1865 the school enrollment had reached over one hundred pupils, and a new brick school 36x24x12 was built on the west side of the church. The contract was let to Henry Jutzl for \$1150, completed in November, and a second teacher called.

On New Year's Day, 1878, it was unanimously resolved to build a new church. In order to avoid a burdensome debt it was resolved to erect the building by installments. The congregation proceeding each time no further than funds on hand permitted. In October, 1878, the corner stone was laid. In 1879 the structure was roofed, and in November, 1880, the building was dedicated. This building site opposite the old church was purchased at a cost of \$600. The church itself cost \$11,586.80, leaving a cash balance of \$49.05 in the building treasury plus \$256.90 in unpaid pledges. The church was built of brick, 44x76, including the chancel, but excluding the tower which had a height of 120 feet. The church, together with the balconies, seated about 550 persons.

A new pipe organ, built by the Jackson Organ Company in Chester, was installed in June, 1887. On September 3, 1893, it was resolved to build a 15 foot addition to the brick school at a cost of \$721.38. In 1897 the congregation observed its fiftieth anniversary. In 1901 the entire interior of the church was redecorated at a cost of \$835. Mother Allmeyer presented the congregation with two new bells, a large and small one. English services were introduced in 1901.

On September 2, 1910, Teacher M. H. Grefe was installed as teacher of the lower grades.

The corner stone of a new brick school house was laid July 6, 1913, completed in 1914. The building had three class rooms on the lower floor and a confirmation class room and hall, seating 300 on the upper floor. The building site diagonally across from the old school, 140x240, was purchased at a cost of \$1900, the building costing \$14,486.95. German was now taught as an optional language study in grades 3 to 8. Gradually in the course of years only one German church service per month was conducted, and this was finally eliminated.

Building operations of a frame parsonage on the site of the former school were begun in the fall of 1919 and completed in May, 1920, at a cost of \$8500.

In March, 1923, a plan to renovate and remodel the church was begun. A new addition to form a cross was added to the rear; a new asbestos roof placed over old and new sections; the entire exterior covered with stucco; the interior decorated; hot air furnaces with blower system installed; new pews and new windows and lighting fixtures installed; an altar and pulpit, a gift from old Immanuel Church of St. Louis installed together with a rebuilt organ; and the balconies rebuilt. This was dedicated on the

fourth Sunday in Lent, 1924. The cost was \$28,000. A month later the church observed its 75th anniversary.

On April 23, 1939, the observance of the 90th anniversary was held. The interior of the church was redecorated. A new steam furnace was installed and two new stops were added to the organ. City water and lavatories were installed. All societies of the congregation aided in this program.

In 1942 an addition to the school was completed at a cost of \$42,000. Early in the spring of 1948 plans were laid for the centennial observance. It was resolved to reface the exterior of the church with permastone and to redecorate the interior, to install new chancel furniture and to cover the floor with asbestos tile, to remodel the front of the church by adding two new entrances and hanging all new doors and building a new concrete step across the entire front. In addition it was decided to repair and remodel the organ and to install large circulating fans for ventilation.

On April 22, 1949, they rededicated the newly-renovated and remodeled church, thus observing their 100th anniversary. At this time the congregation numbered 1400 souls, 1080 communicants, and nearly 200 voting members.

There were many centennial memorial gifts, among them the lower clocks by John F. Herschbach in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Herschbach Sr.; Mr. and Mrs. Edward Herschbach and Helen Beushcer in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Herschbach Sr.; Mrs. Karl Natho and Fred and John Herschbach Jr. in memory of their mother, Mrs. Emma Gilster Herschbach.

About four or five years ago a new electric organ was installed.

In 1963 the Ladies' Aid Society of the church observed their 100th anniversary with a membership of 75. Their first meeting was held in the home of Mrs. Henry C. Eggers on June 24, 1863. These ladies probably made linen bandages and quilts for wounded soldiers during the Civil War. Their membership now is 81, and Mrs. William H. Welge is starting her 16th year as treasurer.

There is also another women's organization—the Lutheran Women's Missionary League which was organized October, 1936, with Emma Sasse as the first president. They started with 12 charter members and now number 100. They meet at night and are very active in missionary work.

There are Senior and Junior Walther Leagues for the youth, the Lutheran Laymen's League for the men, and a Parent-Teacher League.

My very good friend Mr. Martin H. Grefe gave 55 years of service as teacher, principal, and organist to St. John's. He retired in 1965 and lives in Chester at 1723 Swanwick Street with his daughter Marion. He is a member of the National, State, and County Retired Teachers' Association.

23.

As I travel north on West Holmes from High Street, I realize that northward beyond Allendale and to the far east, all the land that once was farms and pasture is no more. This area is thickly populated with homes and many new streets have been made.

At the eastern end of High Street we have Koenenman Acres, a low rental housing project of 46 units. This with 14 units in Harmsen Circle,

plus the 62 additional units on George Street promised by September 1, 1970 (both of which I have previously mentioned) will make 122 units for Chester. Also on High Street where the William Brinkman home once stood, the telephone company has built a business building. In the former Laurence Paulus home is the First Apostolic United Pentecostal Church, and Ray Grah operates a garage on this street, Bill Steffen's home and TV service is at 1315 High Street and at 1319 now the home of Mrs. Harry Jackson, once the George Jostman Photograph Studio.

As I continue my journey northward I pass a Gulf Service Station where the Coyle home once stood. The Lincoln Mobile Homes near the Diefenbach home and Mr. Child's Florist Shop near the old Millner home are next. Across the street is the location of the old home of Chester's Pop Eye, Rocky Feagle.

Chester is proud of the fact that our first governor of Illinois Shadrach Bond was interred here in the Evergreen Cemetery. In 1883 the state erected over his grave a granite monument with four feet of ground around it declared as a park, the smallest park in the state. Across from the cemetery entrance on Solomon Street I believe Jostman's Monument business once stood.

Near the north end of the cemetery West Holmes leaves Route 3 to the right and enters a densely populated residential area. The bridge road also leaves Route 3 to the left and crosses the Chester Toll Bridge into Missouri. Many trucks use this bridge road and the busses stop for passengers, which is a convenience for many Chester people.

As far north as McGuireville homes have been built all along Route 3, also some businesses, including the Bal Tabarin Restaurant and Motel, El Capri Motel and Steak House, Inc., Hi-3 Motel, Kipp's Drive-in Restaurant and bus stop, Kipp's Bonnie Maid Laundromat, and a new AG Store, Moore and Wittenborn's Thriftway.

About a mile farther north on the old Eno Welge farm is a new golf course completed last year, and privately owned with a membership of about 100. The farm house is being used as club house at present.

Returning now to Allendale we visit the Chester Greenhouses and Nursery at 1307. As I visited with Harry Lutz, he said that when he and his wife located in 1930 on this property, there were only three houses in the immediate area. One was the home of William Fey, one John Wright's, and the third owned by an older lady whose name he didn't remember. Behind them was a wheat field, and behind that, an orchard. Mr. Lutz said he had seen many changes in these 40 years, and because of arthritis is unable to do many things he once did around the greenhouses. For several years he has been semi-retired, and his son Kenneth Bruce carries on the business with Dad doing what he can. Mr. Lutz praised his son's ability very highly, saying that Kenneth really has the art necessary for the making of this business successful. Kenneth has added that of nursery since coming to the business and does much in that department.

Kline's Sheet Metal Shop is located at 1302 Allendale, and many other businesses are scattered among the homes in the northeast area. When I was growing up our popular skating place was Herschbach's pond at the end of Oak Street. There was always a big bon fire built in the evening for light and warmth while skating. That pond is just a memory

now. The famous Old Plank Road from Chester to Bremen is another memory. About 50 years ago it was legally declared abandoned. The building of the road took place in 1849. Planks were laid crosswise. It was 12 feet wide and had pull-offs on it for meeting approaching wagons. Toll rates were 25 cents for one way with toll gates at Camptown and Bremen.

We now retrace our steps on West Holmes to Swanwick and start down the hill on East Holmes. We are interested in the building on the corner at State Street. This was once the blacksmith shop of Mr. Lampe who for many, many years gave wonderful service to the people of Chester. No job was ever too small for him to do, welding a broken pipe or tool, sharpening a lawn mower, also draining, cleaning and repairing furnaces. It seemed that when anything about the house ceased to work properly, we always said, "Call Mr. Lampe. He can fix it." And most of the time he could. It was a sad day when he retired and closed his shop.

We now pass down the hill into a section which once was called China Town. I never did understand just why. At the foot of the hill over to the left and back from the street stands a building, the remains of a brewery that once operated in this area. When it was in operation I do not know, and I can't find anyone who does seem seem to know.

24.

Henry Herschbach Sr. was one of six children born to Anna Scheidt and Karl Gerharat Herschbach, who were both born and married in Germany. Henry was born June 3, 1850, at Chauteau and Manchester Avenue, in St. Louis, Mo., and was fourth in order of birth with four brothers and one sister.

The family moved to Chester when Henry was three years old and lived across the street south of the court house for four years while his father cleared the farm of trees and built a three room house.

As the boys grew up it was their habit on Sunday morning to put on their best suits and walk to Chester and attend church—first one church and another the next Sunday. One Sunday Mr. Pick was on his way to church in his farm wagon, overtook the boys, and asked them to ride. He asked them which they attended and when they said they had no preference, he invited them to go with him to his church—the Lutheran. Willie, Charlie and Henry went, and on July 14, 1866 at ages 16, 18 and 21 years, they joined the Lutheran Church.

When Henry was 19 years old he came to town to work for Jacob Hartenberger, a wagon maker and learned his trade. Jacob had a lovely daughter Carolina Wilhelmena, and as time passed, a romance blossomed between Henry and Wilhelmena. They were married August 24, 1873, by Rev. Stephan in the first "Frame Church Building"—she 18 and Henry, 23 years old. Eight children were born to this union—Emma, Lydia, Elizabeth, Marie, John, Edward, Henry and Frank.

When Jacob Hartenberger died, Henry took over the wagon making shop wood part. Paul Irose did the blacksmithing and iron work. The shop was located at 1500 Swanwick Street. He stayed there until January 16, 1877, when he bought one lot at 1300 Swanwick Street from John Heis, then later an adjoining lot from his mother, Anna Herschbach. Henry then

built the combined wagon and blacksmith shop and went into partnership with his brother Robert, he doing the wood work and Robert, the blacksmithing. Henry hired Mr. Rupert, an expert Bohemian painter to teach him to stripe wagons and buggies and soon became an expert striper and much better and faster than Rupert.

He striped wagons for other wagon makers in Chester, charging \$10 each and could stripe seven to ten per day. They also made plows and harrows.

Then implements were added. The dropper was sold first, but it only cut the wheat and had to be tied by hand. Before this, all wheat had to be cradled. Next came the dropper and reaper which pushed out a bunch of wheat on a table, but still must be tied by hand. Next came the wire binder, which tied the wheat in bundles, but when threshed, the cattle died from eating small pieces of wire. So the binder went out and Appleby and Company invented the twine binder. William Deering Company bought the Appleby patent and made Deering Binders to use with binder twine.

Henry then added two-wheel carts, then four-wheel buggies and surreys, and many fine spring wagons which sold readily for high prices. Robert left for California, and Louis Lutz and Guy Tudor were hired to do the blacksmithing. Tom Neely, Martin Martinie and his brother Charlie were hired to help with the woodwork. From 75 to 100 wagons were made and sold each year, depending on the farmers' crops. They came long distances on horseback, spent the night in town and drove out next day with two or three wagons and spring wagons at a time. The price of a wagon was figured to equal the price of 100 bushels of wheat.

In 1897 Henry decided to build a brick building and arranged with the Warden at Menard Prison to get the brick when ready. The building was completed in 1898. Bill Brinkman was the contractor, and George Weber, the brick foreman. Henry Jutzi, Adam Gnaegy and Bert Allen's father were the brick layers and stone masons.

There was a five-room apartment on the second floor and two other large store rooms which Joshua Rickman used for his knitting mill which he moved from the river front. Later he built his own building.

The blacksmith shop on the State Street side formerly used by Mr. Lampe to which I referred in my last story, was used by the Herschbachs, but is not thought to be the original one.

Henry finally decided in 1901 to retire from the business and turned it over to two of his sons, Edward and John, who had grown up in the business with him when they were not in school. Over a period of years Henry had acquired several farms on Kaskaskia Island, so he kept himself busy looking after them and the threshing rigs.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Herschbach Sr. lived a prosperous and happy 72 years together. They left the big house, having a smaller one next door, and together, they spent their later years reviewing life's activities and receiving their families and many friends who were always welcome. They were very gracious hosts. Mr. Herschbach died October 25, 1948, at the age of 93 years, four months, and three days.

The new store on the first floor contained a tin shop and general hardware, then when Mr. John became the first automobile dealer in Chester, a garage was added to service the cars, and the store became

Herschbach's Auto and Implement Company. In 1910 the first car to be sold in Chester was to Butch Heine to be used in his taxi service. The cost was \$900. It had a right-hand drive, single cylinder engine with solid tires on buggy wheels. It was shipped complete in closed boxes and assembled here. In 1915 John bought Edward's share of the business and continued alone. In 1916 John sold a 12-passenger bus to George Douglas who also was in the taxi business. It had four seats with side curtains rolled to the top and let down in bad weather.

In 1934 John retired, selling the business to Ted Search and Dolph Werre who continued there until 1949 when they moved to their new building. Then the first floor was remodeled for Mr. Weithorn's variety store.

In 1951 the second floor was remodeled for apartments and offices, including an elevator.

The Index Variety Store has just moved out and the Ace Hardware, formerly at 977 State Street, now occupies the first floor.

I have been told that the 977 State Street building owned by St. Mary's Catholic Church will be removed and used by their congregation for much needed parking.

The small one-story brick on the east side of the Herschbach building was built in 1938 by a Mr. Perman of Sikeston, Mo. for Harry Schmidt's variety store which had operated downtown since 1928. In 1948 Mr. Schmidt closed his store, and Kimmel's Auto Supply has operated there since.

The two houses next door are very old, having originally belonged to Fred Middendorf.



Buena Vista National Bank In 1976

For many years the City Hall had been downtown next door to the jail. To say the least, it was inadequate in every way. In 1961 a new one was built at 1330 Swanwick Street. It is brick of colonial design with cupola clocks on the top. A small yard with shrubs grace the front, and the sloping lot makes possible in the back, a ground floor garage for the fire engine and cells for a jail.

The first floor contains a general office, a council room with a small auditorium for visitors, offices for Mayor, City Clerk, private conference

room, plus three rental rooms. It is also headquarters for the police department.

Directly across the street is the Chester Post Office built in 1939 on the former Fred Middendorf home location. In the early days the first Post Office was on the water front.

Mr. John F. Baumann, grandfather of the Richter sisters and brothers, was the Postmaster during Civil War days. In 1880 it was moved on the hill and located in the Chester Theater Building, where it remained until 1939, when the new building was completed. This building is of brick colonial design with the symbolic eagle gracing the cupola.

25.

The following information was obtained from a special edition of the Randolph County Newspaper, Inc., announcing the opening of the new home of the Buena Vista National Bank on November 14, 1960:

The Buena Vista National Bank had its beginning in "Grandma's Room" in 1882. Two sons of Doris Gilster, known as Grandma to several generations in Chester started a private bank pretty much by accident in 1882. L. H. and Henry Gilster at that time operated a general merchandising business where Sol Vines operates a department store today. The banking business was just a side line.

Few Chester enterprises maintained checking accounts in the 1880's, and those that did, had their accounts in St. Louis, for there were no local banks. The Gilster brothers dealt with a St. Louis bank, and, as an accommodation to local people, both merchants and individuals, issued their own check against a St. Louis bank for the convenience of those people in the community who had occasion to transfer funds from one city to another by mail. Sometimes the check was paid for in produce; sometimes in cash, and on occasion, the check was issued against a promise to pay at a later date. That's how the Gilster brothers got into the banking business and that was the beginning of the Buena Vista National Bank which has continued under various names from that day to this.

From 1882 to 1891 the banking house was "Grandma's Room" a single room dwelling adjacent to the store connected with both the store and the L. H. Gilster residence which stood at the rear of the lot where the Western Auto Store stands today. Grandma had ready access to her son's home and the store from her apartment. For convenience and privacy the banking business was transacted in Grandma's room.

In 1891 the Gilster brothers dissolved their partnership, and Henry started a store at 977 State Street. L. H. continued to operate the original store and banking business. A bank was constructed adjacent to the store on the front of the lot approximately where the western half of Grimm's Western Auto Store fronts Swanwick Street.

The bank of L. H. Gilster and Company continued to do a private banking business until 1912 at which time the bank was reorganized as "The State Bank of L. H. Gilster," and, to make it more of a community institution, Charles F. Welge and Ralph E. Sprigg joined with L. H. Gilster, Jr. and August E. Gilster in their reorganization.

In 1916 the bank was reorganized as a co-partnership under the

name of the "Buean Vista Bank." There were 16 partners in the bank from 1916 to 1920. They were Allen A. Short, Isaac Meredith, W. H. Roberts, D. H. Holman, William R. MacKenzie, Adam Gnaegy, Maurice Mudd, F. B. Wolff, George Hoffman, J. S. Morrison, Louis Kuhrtz, Savannah Tudor, Albert Gilster, Ferd Witt, Henry Riechman and Henry Witt.

In February 1918, the property at the corner of Stacy and Swanwick Streets was purchased from Dr. William R. MacKenzie for the purpose of building a new bank. In June 1918, a one-story building was started, and was completed and occupied in 1919.

In 1920 private banks and private bank companies were required by state law to be chartered either as a national bank or as a state bank. The co-partners of the Buena Vista Bank elected to take a state charter, and on Dec. 21, 1920, the partnership ceased to exist as such and the bank became the Buena Bista State Bank.

George Hoffman was the first president of the bank as a chartered institution. Louis Kuhrtz was the first cashier.

In 1926 the one-story building was enlarged plus a complete second story added.

In March, 1944, the Buena Vista State Bank gave up its state charter and became the Buena Vista National Bank of Chester, a name and charter which have remained unchanged from that day in 1944 to today.

On November 14, 1960, the new home of the Buena Vista National Bank was opened at 1309 Swanwick Street, just a little over a year since ground was first broken November 2, 1959.

The building with its modern colonial architecture, incorporates some of the latest facilities in modern banking procedures with the charm of yesteryear, making a perfect companion piece for the federal post office building next door. New to the Chester skyline is the lighted cupola with its American Eagle weathervane on top of the building.

In addition to the first drive-in windows in Randolph County, a convenient 24-hour depository with letter drop and the electrically operated vault door, the new building offers many other features for customer convenience and comfort.

Blacktop driveways and landscaped parking areas offer off-street parking for customers transacting business inside the bank, with convenient front or rear entrances to the bank lobby from the parking lot. The parking lot is floodlighted for night use and may be entered from Swanwick or from West Holmes through the alley behind the post office.

Inside the bank a spacious lobby is lighted by three large especially-designed chandeliers which reflect the gold flecked accoustical ceiling. The American Eagle, symbolic of the finest traditions in this nation since its adoption as a symbol of fearless courage in the days of George Washington, has been incorporated in the graceful Early American chandeliers. The walls are finished in Mesquite Green with the rear wall of Colonial Rose. Woodwork of solid birch has been finished in light ivory, and oak doors are blonded with white Firzite over hand-ribbed lacquer. A mono-chromatic color effect is carried out with a lighter Linden Green in the bookkeeping department which is visible from the lobby, through borrowed light windows, custom made fixtures, desks and other furniture are of walnut

finish; filing equipment is velvet beige. Colors were chosen for the building to conform with the colonial period of architecture.

The ground level is carpeted throughout except for terrazzo tile in the main lobby area and vinyl tile in the bookkeeping department to facilitate moving of equipment. The main lobby is equipped with writing counters and an adding machine for use of customers. A waiting room is also supplied for customers waiting for special services. Five consultation rooms including three private offices are available for private transactions or discussions at the bank.

Officers and directors' rooms are located to the east of the central lobby with the tellers' stations—there are no tellers' cages—west of the lobby. Further to the west of the tellers are commodious bookkeeping and record keeping facilities. To the rear and west of the lobby is the main vault. The individual rooms for safety deposit vault customers are located in close proximity to the vault.

A spacious stairway leading to the lower level is located at the north end of the lobby. Below the lobby with access either through the banking floor or from an outside entrance is a "community service room." Adjacent to it is a fully equipped kitchen and is available to clubs, committees or boards for their regular or special meetings. Floors have been sound-proofed to completely separate this room from the bank. A convenient lounge area is close by, providing wardrobe facilities for those attending functions in the community room.

A four zone air conditioning and heating unit by which temperatures in four areas of the bank can be independently controlled is located in a service room opposite the kitchen. The Buena Vista National Bank is the first building in the county to install this new system of individually controlled temperature in zoned areas.

The Directors of the bank in 1960 included W. E. Mullins, president; A. L. Gilster, A. Koopman, J. L. Montroy, Paul Nehrt, C. G. Walter and William H. Welge.

Bloomsdale Bank Building and Equipment Company was the architect for the new building and Barmac Construction Company, the general contractor.

The old bank building was sold in 1964 to the Southern Illinois Sand Company which occupies it, along with the Chester Insurance Company.

26.

As I continue my walk up Swanwick Street I see the office of the Jiffy Printers at 1430 where job printing is done. This property is about 80 years old, having belonged to Fred Rebbe where he made wagons. There were display rooms in the front on both the first and second floors for buggies and surreys that were for sale. An elevator was used to transport them from one floor to the other.

On the first floor in the back was a tire setter for making tight the iron rim or tire of the wagon wheel. This was later sold to the prison. The old blacksmith shop of Fred Rebbe Sr. had been torn down. It dated back to pre-Civil War days.

Across the street is the Randolph County Department of Public Aid which is a very busy place.

Behind this, facing Van Zant Street is the clinic of Dr. Kenneth L. Kuhrtz, Dentist, and Dr. N. G. Springer, Optometrist. In 1938 Dr. Kuhrtz began his dentistry in the Michaelis store building, moving in 1946 to the Buena Vista Bank Building where he stayed until December 1959, when he and Dr. Springer built their clinic. Dr. Springer opened his first office in the Herschbach building in 1950, then in 1959 moved into the new clinic at 203 Van Zant. Dr. Springer is a very busy man. He is just now completing his second term as a member of the State Legislature. He has made a good member, working hard for the people whom he represents. I know, because I had occasion to talk with him several times when the Randolph County Retired Teachers had a bill coming up, and I know how hard he worked for us.

Berry's Grocery at 1500 Swanwick originally was the Eggers Grocery. Mr. Angus Berry and son Jim began their business on the water front in 1929, moving to the present location in 1952. It is a wonderful neighborhood store and so very convenient for people who live close by.

Across the street at 1530 is the W & C Motor Sales and Service Company. Nearby is the Lochhead repair shop.

As I pass 1506 Swanwick I think of Dr. E. R. May who is no longer with us, but the memory of his life and work remains. Dr. May had the distinction of serving in both World Wars. During World War I he was a Captain in the Army Medical Corps, getting his training at the Army Medical School in Washington, D. C. Between 1917 and 1919 he was in charge of a hospital in Nantes, France.

He then returned to private practice in McLain County near Bloomington where the Commander of the American Legion appointed him State Medical Officer of Illinois for one year. He also served on the Tubercular Board there.

During World War II he was Lt. Commander in the Navy, doing service at the Bethesda, Maryland, National Navy Hospital. In 1932 he came to Chester to serve on the medical staff at the Southern Illinois Penitentiary at Menard, and later a Psychiatrist at Illinois Security Hospital. At the same time he began his private practice in Chester which he continued until his death in 1966.

While here he was Commander of the 25th District of the American Legion and later, Commander of the Fifth Division of the Legion. He was on the Tubercular Board of Randolph County and was a member of The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, D.A.V., Lions Club, and a 32nd Degree Mason of the Bloomington Consistory.

During his term as City Alderman of Chester he originated the idea of advertising Chester as the home of Pop Eye. Then he became ill, and I think a sign later was erected at the Chester Bridge saying, "The Home of Pop Eye."

When I reach 1836 Swanwick Street, I pause to think of the gentleman within this home who has reached heights in his profession which come to the very few. The coming is never easy. He has earned it all and is to be congratulated for ascending the ladder rung by rung to achieve such heights. Judge William G. Juergens was graduated from Carthage College and holds a law degree from the University of Michigan Law School. He was in private practice at Chester from 1928-1938, then was elected County

Judge of Randolph County where he served until 1950. He served as Circuit Judge from 1951-1956 and that year was appointed United States District Judge, which position he still holds.

He has served as a member of the Advisory Board for Illinois Institute for Juvenile Research and currently holds membership in the Randolph County Bar Association, the Illinois State Bar Association, the Federal Bar Association, and the Bar Association of the Seventh Judicial Circuit. He is listed in "Who's Who in America."

In 1961 Carthage College awarded him an Honor Alumnus Award for his outstanding achievements in the legal profession. On Sunday, May 17, the speaker at Carthage College's commencement exercises is to be none other than the Honorable William G. Juergens, Chief Judge, U. S. District Court, Eastern District of Illinois.

Judge Juergens also will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree during the commencement service, granted for his "distinctive contributions to society and the legal profession as a practicing attorney and Federal Judge."

I know I speak for all the citizens of Chester when I say, "Congratulations, Judge Juergens, we are very proud of you."

As I arrive at the Chester High School building at 1901 Swanwick my mind travels back to the Central School buiding downtown which I attended—all is gone except memories.

As early as 1830 school houses were located at various places in Chester—near the present cemetery and under the hill near the old Presbyterian Church which later was the sight of the Lincoln School.

As stated in the "Combined History of Randolph, Monroe, and Perry Counties" the Board of Trustees in 1839 arranged to erect a building 28x40 feet, to be used as a school, house, meeting house, and town house. Mather and Company gave the site. Its cost exceeded \$3000. Peter McCulloh did the plastering for \$130.

Thirty pupils were found, and a contract made with A. P. Eaton to teach for \$2.50 per quarter for each pupil.

In 1859 a building was erected called the "Pride of Southern Illinois." In 1882 it became a two-story wing of a three-story "Central School" building. Besides the City of Chester the school district included portions of township seven, range six, and township seven, range seven. At this time the colored children used a building in the first ward.

There was also a building in the third ward used by primary children. This was called the "Little Brick School House." Miss Fannie Whitehead was the teacher. I attened this school and referred to it in a previous article. Eight teachers were employed to whom salaries amounting to \$4700 were paid during the year 1882-1883. The third year was added to the curriculum at this time.

In 1885 Chester had its first approved high school, and its first recorded graduating class numbered eight as follows: Eloise Harmer, Dane (LeMay), Sara Tate, Martha Nisbet, Eliza Mann (Cosby), Mary Alice Crissey and Susannah Tate.

In 1904 another wing was added to the Central School and added the fourth year to the curriculum. There was no graduating class that year, but in 1905 I was one of three girls and five boys to graduate.



Chester High School



Central School
Building



St. Mary's Catholic School

In 1926 plans were made to build a separate high school, using the Central Building for grades one through seven. This new building was erected at 1901 Swanwick with the first class graduating in the spring of 1927. The total enrollment of the high school then was 66. Superintendent, E. W. Heob; Board Members, P. E. Stadler, W. C. Roberts, H. F. W. Juergens, Albert Gilster, John Allison, Ida R. Bronson, and Anna K. Mann. Architect, E. N. Pillsbury; E. A. Crippen, Contractor.

In 1936 a well-equipped gymnasium was added. The enrollment had now reached 200. Superintendent, W. R. Lowry; Board members, H. F. W. Juergens, John A. File, Albert Gilster, H. L. Uffelman and Ebers Hoffmann.

In 1961 the Colbert gymnasium was added. This included a cafeteria. Superintendent Holly C. Marchildon, Jr., Board Members—A. L. Ottesen, Lester Thureau, Arnold Ehlers, Jr., Edward Powley, Ray Grah, Willard Reisinger and Dr. Kenneth Kuhrtz. As of now (1970) the enrollment is 500.



Chester Grade School



St. John
Lutheran
School

When my article closed last week I was at the Chester High School. This week I will tell you of one professional man in Chester who not only

believed in education, but found time to participate by being an active member of the Chester School Board for 14 years and contributed much to the culture of our city.

This man was Dr. Albert E. Fritze. The Chester Herald-Tribune of March 28, 1935, carried a tribute to him when he celebrated his 74th birthday and the golden anniversary of his successful medical career. This article was written by a "master writer"—Mr. John A. File, and I'm taking the liberty of using it this week.

On a windy day in March 1885, an energetic young graduate of the Homeopathic Medical College of Missouri, located in St. Louis, hung out his shingle in Carmi over in White County in the Wabash River Valley and sat down in his newly-furnished office to await his first patient.

"That young man, who ten days previously had received the diploma that entitled him to add 'Doctor' to the front of his signature, was Dr. Albert E. Fritze.



Dr. Albert E. Fritze



Bond Monument, Evergreen Cemetery, Chester, Ill. First Governor of Illinois.

"On last Friday, March 15, Dr. Fritze celebrated the Golden An-

niversary of his entry into his chosen profession, the practice of medicine. Of his half-century of service, almost 43 years have been spent in Chester, which Dr. Fritze has seen grow from a small river town to a bustling little modern city. And the venerable doctor has played no small part in bringing about this transformation.

"Exactly 74 years ago today on March 28, 1861, just a few weeks after Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office as President of the United States, young Albert was born near St. Paul, Minn., the son of Charles C. and Susannah F. Fritze. His parents were both born in Germany, coming to the United States and while quite young were married in the State of Michigan.

"His boyhood was spent in the manner common to thousands of other youths of that period, attending the schools near his home and, at the same time, assisting his father in the many tasks about the farm on which they lived.

"But the farm life was not entirely in keeping with his idea of a career, so in 1879 when he reached his eighteenth year, he entered the Wesleyan College at Mount Pleasant, Iowa, remaining there for two years. At the end of that time he had determined to enter the medical profession and spent the next 12 months reading medicine under Dr. W. Fisher of St. Paul. From St. Paul he went to St. Louis to become a student at the Homeopathic College of Missouri and was graduated from that institution March 5, 1885.

"In his first location in Carmi, Dr. Fritz practiced his profession for a year. At the expiration of that time he came to Randolph County, making Ellis Grove his home and engaging there in active practice. In the fall of 1893 he moved to Chester.

"Two months after his graduation in May 1885, Dr. Fritze married Miss Anna Schaltmann of St. Paul. One child, who died in infancy, was born to this union. Soon afterward Mrs. Fritze passed away.

"Later Dr. Fritze married Miss Magdalene Heob, daughter of Fred and Elizabeth Heob. Dr. and Mrs. Fritze adopted and reared two daughters: Mrs. Thomas Herschbach of San Jose, Calif., and Mrs. William H. Welge of this city. Mrs. Fritze died Sept. 9, 1931.

"Dr. Fritze was initiated into Kaskaskia Lodge No. 36 A.F. and A.M. and later transferred his membership to Chester Lodge No. 72. He is member of the Methodist Church.

"To the city in which he spent most of his life, Dr. Fritze has been a valuable citizen. Twice he has ably headed the city government as Mayor, and he became one of the first advocates for the installation of a sewer system here. Decidedly progressive in city affairs, he has always been interested in what he terms 'what is best for Chester.'

"The 14 years he served as a member of the local school board and is at present a member of the Board of Health. He is a member of the Randolph County and Illinois Medical Societies.

"A 'man's man' in every sense of the word, Dr. Fritze is a lover of outdoor life and is an ardent fisherman and camper—especially in his home state of Minnesota where he spends most of his infrequent vacation periods.

"During his 49 years of practice in Randolph County Dr. Fritze has made a host of friends, not only in the county, but all over Southern

Illinois—friends who are remembering his Golden Anniversary and showering him with congratulations.

"But even though his first 50 years of practice are behind him, Dr. Fritze is far from having completed his work. You will find him today busily engaged in caring for his clients. It would seem mighty strange if you found it otherwise."

The following words written by Dr. Fritze were printed in a folder with his picture on the opposite page and sent by him to his many friends, thus showing his appreciation of their congratulations:

"I appreciate the many congratulations on my anniversary—having practiced medicine 50 years. Many of us remember distinctly the past 50 years, and our fathers remember 50 years farther back. The 100 years behind us have seen a complete change in the ways of human beings and in the world's methods.

"Life is troublesome, full of care, disappointments, and bitterness for those who carry responsibility and realize their shortcomings. But it has its reward as great as its worries.

"To possess the friendship and affection of one sincere, loyal human being, to put the welfare of another ahead of your own, finding happiness in that, and when you reach the end of the string and the time comes to fall off into the grave, to feel that you have done what you could, have not neglected those that had a right to count upon you—that makes life worthwhile and wipes out its disappointments.

"I am happy about 50 years of hard work and thank God for many friends. Yours Sincerely, Albert E. Fritze."

Such was the philosophy of Dr. Albert E. Fritze.

I remember well one of Dr. Fritze's greatest extra contributions to Chester was in the field of Fine Arts. He had a great knowledge and appreciation of music, playing the organ, piano and wood wind instruments. He was a "Master Director," organized and directed the first and only symphony orchestra Chester ever had.

Recently I saw a photograph of the original group which was organized in 1898. The orchestra continued until World War I with members changing through the years. The photograph included Chris Bahr, William Eggberry, Frank Bahr, Charles Brandes, Elmo Chenu, Ed Tindall, Louis Smith, John Marsteiner, Henry Stoever, Fred A. Von Gruenigen, Charles McPheters and Dr. Albert Fritze, Director.

They played only symphonic and classical music. After presenting a concert the orchestra traditionally played for dancers for one hour. They also played many benefit concerts for the Red Cross. I especially remember one given at the Chester Opera House.

At first rehearsals were held on George Street in Henry Stoever's marble shop building, and later they used an old building in the 1200 block of Swanwick Street. When Dr. Fritze moved his home and office to the Stahlberg home, between Schroeder's and Schueren's present location, the rehearsals were held there. At this time his new home and office was being built at 139 Opdyke Street. At its completion all rehearsals were held in the doctor's spacious living room, moving to the yard in the summer time. Can't you see all the neighbors assembled on their porches enjoying these concerts each week.

The members were all good musicians who gave their time for the sheer pleasure they themselves received, as well as the pleasure brought to others. Elmo P. Chenu is the only living member of the original group.

Other members at various times included H. Clay Horner, Mable Horner (Dougherty), John Dougherty, Roscoe Morse, Mamie Fritze, John Maurer, Otto Fey, Alma Thies, Clarence Snyder, George Beever, Homer Beever, Lydia Herschbach (Aszmann), Catherine Yourtee (Werner), Ernest Richter, Fred Davis, and Gail Yourtee (Roberts).

28.

As I leave the high school and pass on to Highway 150 I think of the many changes that have taken place in this country road down through the years. It was always quite hilly with small ravines running through parts of it which made farming difficult except on the higher sections, although some could be used for pasture land.

It was a popular road with the gypsies because there were spots near streams for them to make camp for a few days or weeks, as they traveled about the country. Being near town, it was convenient also for the women to walk to town and follow their trade of fortune telling, going from door to door. This was their means of getting food, clothing, and travel money. Often some of the children were with them.

The men usually stayed in camp, working on their wagons, getting everything ready for their next move. They always had several dogs with them, and I can remember when traveling through town, the dogs would always slink under the wagons.

Gypsies were a harmless wandering group of people having dark skin and black hair who probably came from India originally. Fortune telling was handed down from one generation to another, and many women were quite adept in the art.

As I begin my journey down the road I see the following business places scattered among homes and farms: the Superior Cleaners plant operated by the Powley family; then a rather new building containing the Gross Plumbing and Heating and the Insurance Agency; the Chester Building Supplies; a self-service car wash and a housing development.

Suddenly a road turns right which is the old County Farm Road, but the county farm has long been gone. Many lovely homes have been built along the road for quite a distance, because more and more people are moving to the suburbs.

Back on the highway again I see a shoe repair shop, Town and Country Gas Company with Harry McFadden the manager; the Dairy Mart; Crawford Electric; Vincent Birchler's home plus his popular Birchler's Lake; Jung's Big Star Market, and many homes. This immediate area has since the early days been called Camp Town.

Next there is a building development of about 50 homes, plus trailers, with streets laid out to accommodate many more. Then comes the old home of Miss Minnie Adams, for many years our librarian.

I have now arrived at the Union School House, District No. 49. According to records a deed shows one acre bought for \$50 from Adam Douglas in 1866 for the purpose of building a school house. The Union School building was also used in the early days on Sunday afternoon for

church services with the Presbyterian minister coming from Chester. Some of my older friends became members of the Presbyterian Church right there, later transferring to the Chester church.

There are two rooms in the building, and some years they used two teachers and other years, only one. During the last 25 years of its operation, the late Margaret Greer was the teacher. On April 26, 1952, the school was dissolved with teacher and pupils transferred to Chester.

For several years the building was used as a social community meeting place. Now it is occupied by Mac's Welding Shop.

Nearby are two old homes, one about 75 years old which is the home of Elmer Craig, a grandson of William J. Craig who built the big Craig house in 1866. William J. served his country during the Civil War, and at its close, married Miss Louise Snyder and built this Craig home. Four girls and three boys were born to this union. All attended the Union School, including the Sunday services there. Another grandson, Delbert Craig, now owns and occupies this home.

Over these 104 years only three changes have been made in the house. The sitting room which contained an open fire place, has been paneled, the kitchen modernized, and a bathroom built at the end of the hall. In the sitting room under the window are two small doors which, when opened and the window raised, permit one to step outside to get wood for the fireplace. There are two fireplaces upstairs and two downstairs.

The woodwork in the "parlor" and the other rooms are the original beautifully varnished wood. For 104 years a Craig has lived in this house.



Covered Bridge

As I pass on down the road and soon reach the Covered Bridge, I stop to rest, and as I sit here, I realize I have reached the end of my journey. As I gaze upon this 116-year old wooden bridge with its single span of more than 75 feet, sided up and roofed, I realize my ancestors traveled this bridge. My mother often told me some of her experiences. As I look closely at the construction, I also realize that in those days they too had highly skilled designers and builders.

The old roadway that crossed the bridge was in part a planked road, that is, all low and mirey places were floored with heavy planks 12 feet in length and there were pull-outs on it for meeting approaching wagons. The road was built in 1849. Toll rates were 25 cents for one way with toll gates at Camptown and Bremen. The tollkeeper at Camptown was a store keeper,

Mr. G. S. Rust.

One writer has said, "I think of the bridge serving people seeking a new home in the west, the freighter with his heavily-laden wagon drawn by slow-moving ox teams, as well as men traveling by horseback with old-time saddle bags. Later buggies, surreys, farm wagons, sled and sleighs, mud boats, lizards, high-wheeled carts and other conveyances seen no more. The stage coach also used this bridge before railroads came. Altogether it bespeaks another day."

This is the only bridge of its kind left in Southern Illinois.

A plaque on the front of the bridge reads as follows: "Mary's River Covered Bridge built in 1854 was in continuous service until 1930. Originally a part of a plank toll road between Bremen and Chester. All of the timber in this bridge is original with the exceptions of the floor, floor joist, roof and siding. It was acquired by the State of Illinois in 1936 for the purpose of preservation and as a picnic area. Money for the purchase of the site was donated by the Chester Chamber of Commerce."

As I read this plaque I realize my journey is ended. In 12 months I have mentally traveled every street in Chester. I have had many lifts along the way, and to these people I am very grateful, because I could never have made it alone. I have enjoyed every minute of the journey, and if I have brought back happy memories to some who have traveled these roads and can leave a bit of history for younger people who may be interested in Chester, its people and how we lived, then I am glad.



Mrs. Jessie Huffstutler made a record on the first graphophone in Chester pictured here, when she was six years old. The graphophone was owned by Charles Brandes, now owned by Paul Preusse's brother, William Preusse.

From Sparta News-Plaindealer April 3, 1969
Talk On Old Chester Theatre was R.C.H.S. Program Feature

At the business session conducted by Mrs. Hahn, ninety-two members and guests of the Randolph County Historical Society attended the monthly meeting held at the Buena Vista National Bank in Chester Thursday evening, March 20. Hostesses for the evening were Mrs. Harold Hahn, president of the RCHS, and Mrs. J. R. Gordon, both of Chester.

The program was presented by a Chester woman, Mrs. Jessie Lee Huffstutler, who discussed the era when the Opera House was the center of culture and enter-

tainment in the Chester vicinity. She told of her acquaintance with the Schuchert family, the many people who made up what they called "The Opera House Gang" and especially Elza Segar, who went on to create the comic strip character "Popeye" and thus bring fame to his hometown.

Mrs. Huffstutler told of her being pianist at the old Opera House and playing music in keeping with the moods of the silent movies. Using the same song book that she did then, she delighted her audience with the songs to depict various situations and emotions. "For the silent movies my choices of music varied," said Mrs. Huffstutler. "I used popular, rag-time and semi-classics."

"Perils of Pauline"

On Saturday evenings we always had 'The Perils of Pauline' and sometimes I used 'Waves of the Ocean.' It seemed to fit Pauline's many mishaps which kept us on the edges of our chairs. Being a serial, she was always left hanging from a cliff or in some other precarious position for us to worry about."

Mrs. Huffstutler expressed the belief that Segar's "Thimble Theatre" cartoon was based on the Opera House, his memories and experiences. "The hamburger-loving Wimpy," she said, "was his own beloved former manager of the Opera House, Bill Schuchert, and I have been told that Olive Oyl was Mrs. Pascal, the wife of a former businessman downtown near the court house. Popeye was Rocky Feigle, a Polish young man who lived with his mother and sister near the Evergreen Cemetery."

Among the guests at the meeting were Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Schuchert, Jr. of Chester who provided many mementoes of the old Opera House and assisted Mrs. Huffstutler with her research. Mr. Schuchert is the great-grandson of the owner of the theatre. Also present was a Chester man, L. A. (Red) Faverty, a friend of the Schuchert family and projectionist at the Opera House at the time Mrs. Huffstutler was employed there. He and Mr. Segar were close friends. Another Chester man, Ted Mueller, was employed at the theatre at a later date. He was unable to be present but was represented by his wife and son.

During the social hour, refreshments of "Wimpy" hamburgers, popcorn and soda pop were served by Mr. Faverty, Harold Hahn and S. E. Dial. Mr. Faverty attired in a high chef's hat and huge white apron, portrayed Segar's character, Rough House, the Cook. The hamburgers were fixed at Wittenbrink's Tavern, which is located at the same spot as the old Wiebusch Tavern where Mr. Schuchert and his "Opera House Gang" often enjoyed hamburgers.



B.V. Comet Band, Chester — This picture was taken in front of what is now 1158 George St. the E. Fisher residence. It was then the residence of J. F. Schuchert. Left to right — 1. Fred Sanneman; 2. ?; 3. ?; 4. Bill Gilcrest; 5. Jake Saak; 6. Adam Ocks; 7. Charlie Schrodi; 8. Frank Wenda; 9. Henry Stoever; 10. John F. Schuchert; 11. Albert Mueller; 12. Fred Schuchert.



From The Opera House In Chester – 1890: Left Back Row: Ed Matlock – Lula McAtee Matlock – Ola Steele Heine – Chas. Gausmann – May Russell – Jim Adams – Art Beare – Mamie Ames – Al Kennedy. Sitting: Louis Heitman – Guy Penny – Molly Schuchert – Miss Cora Ames – Frank Matlock



Inside Opera House, August 13, 1914



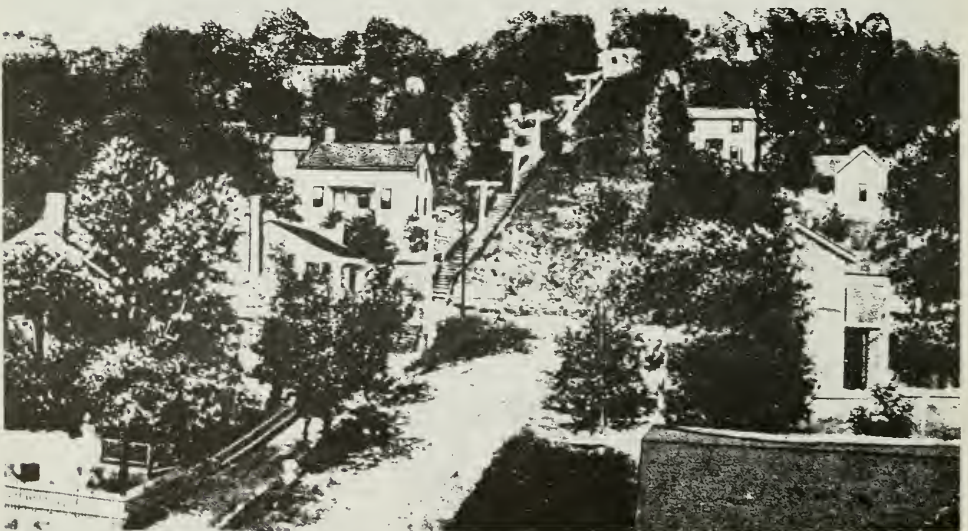
Randolph County Court House, Dedicated June 14, 1975.



Frank Wolff and Bill Schuchert at old Wiebusch front yard, now old dime store.



Young's Ave., Chester, Ill.



Public Steps, Chester, Ill.



Mississippi River, From Water Tower, Chester, Ill.



Buena Vista Mill about 1900 and was owned by Henry Gilster, grandfather of Wm. H. Welge.



Scene after tornado of 1897 now the Food Park Store, formerly Uffelman's.



Tom Howorth In Newspaper Office.



Chester Herald Tribune



Shoe Factory, Chester, Ill. looked like this until May 1922.



Chester Public Library, dedicated in 1928.



Chester Water Tower



First Christian Church



First Methodist Church



- 1 CATHOLIC SCHOOL & HALL
- 2 SISTERS RESIDENCE
- 3 ST MARY OF HELP CATHOLIC CHURCH
- 4 PARSONAGE

St. Mary's



RECEIVED FROM CALVARY TEMPLE



Calvary Temple Assembly of God Church



Peace Lutheran Church



First Baptist Church



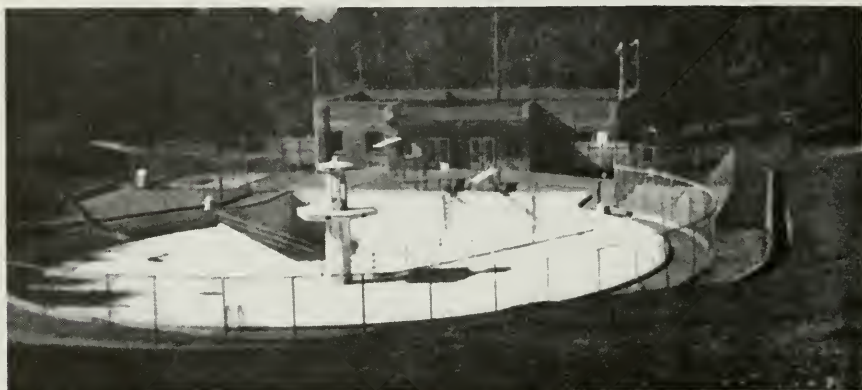
Chester Municipal Building - City Hall



Chester Memorial Hospital



Cole Memorial Park, Chester, Illinois



Chester Swimming Pool



First Presbyterian Church



St. Ann's Home – Chester, Ill.



Picture in 1976 of remains of three story rock building which was used through past years as a mill, warehouse, railroad office and signal department of the Missouri Pacific. During the flood of 1844 the steam boat "Belair" ran against it and damaged the upper story.



These buildings are where the First National Bank parking lot is now. The Gordon Telephone Co. was owned by Lucky (Eugene) Gordon.



The "Bluff City" as she burned at the Chester waterfront on November 18, 1897.



Detrich "Dietz" Helmers,
Mayor Of Chester, Ill.



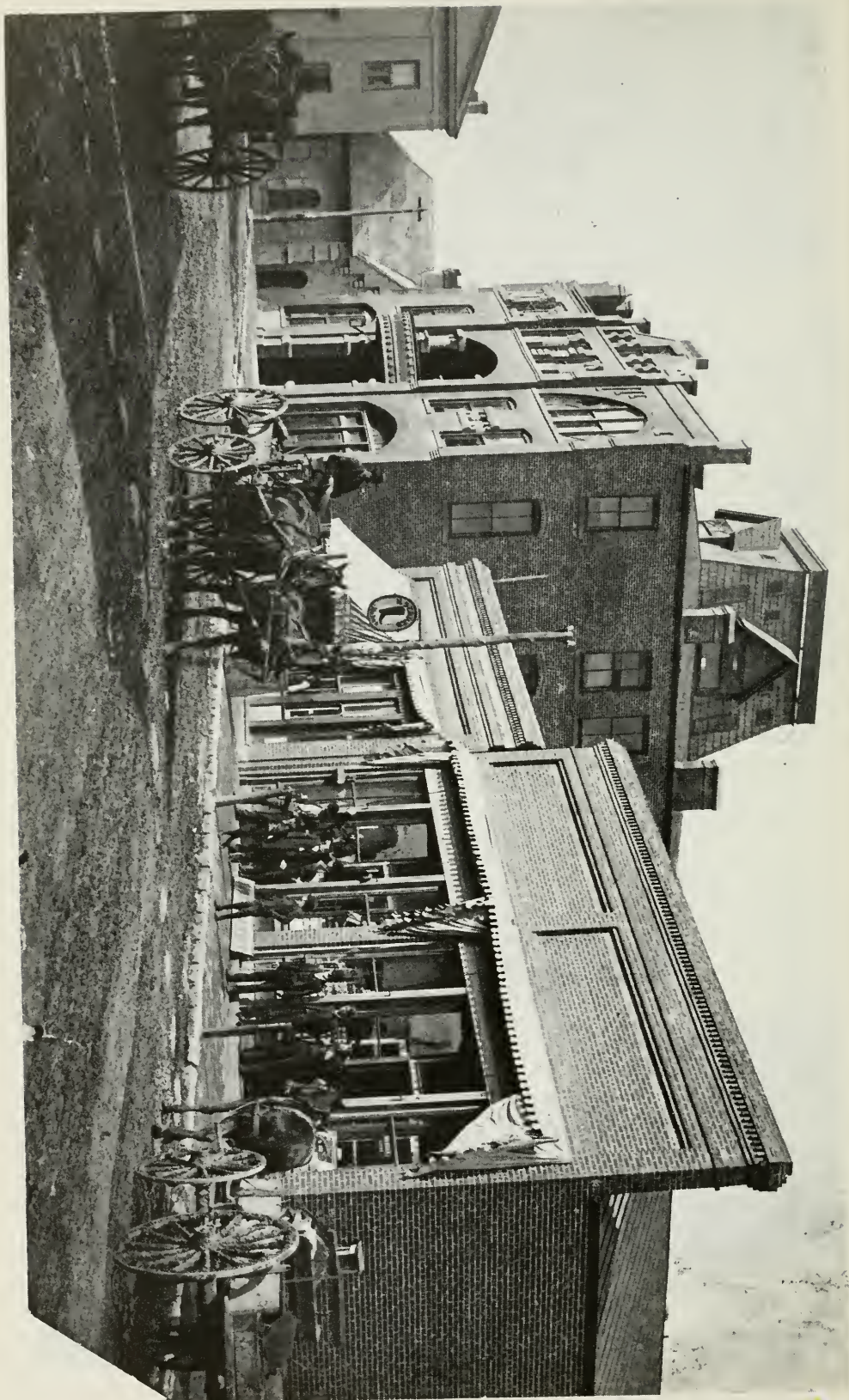
Chester Monument and Marble Works owned by Edmond Howorth, father of Thomas Howorth.

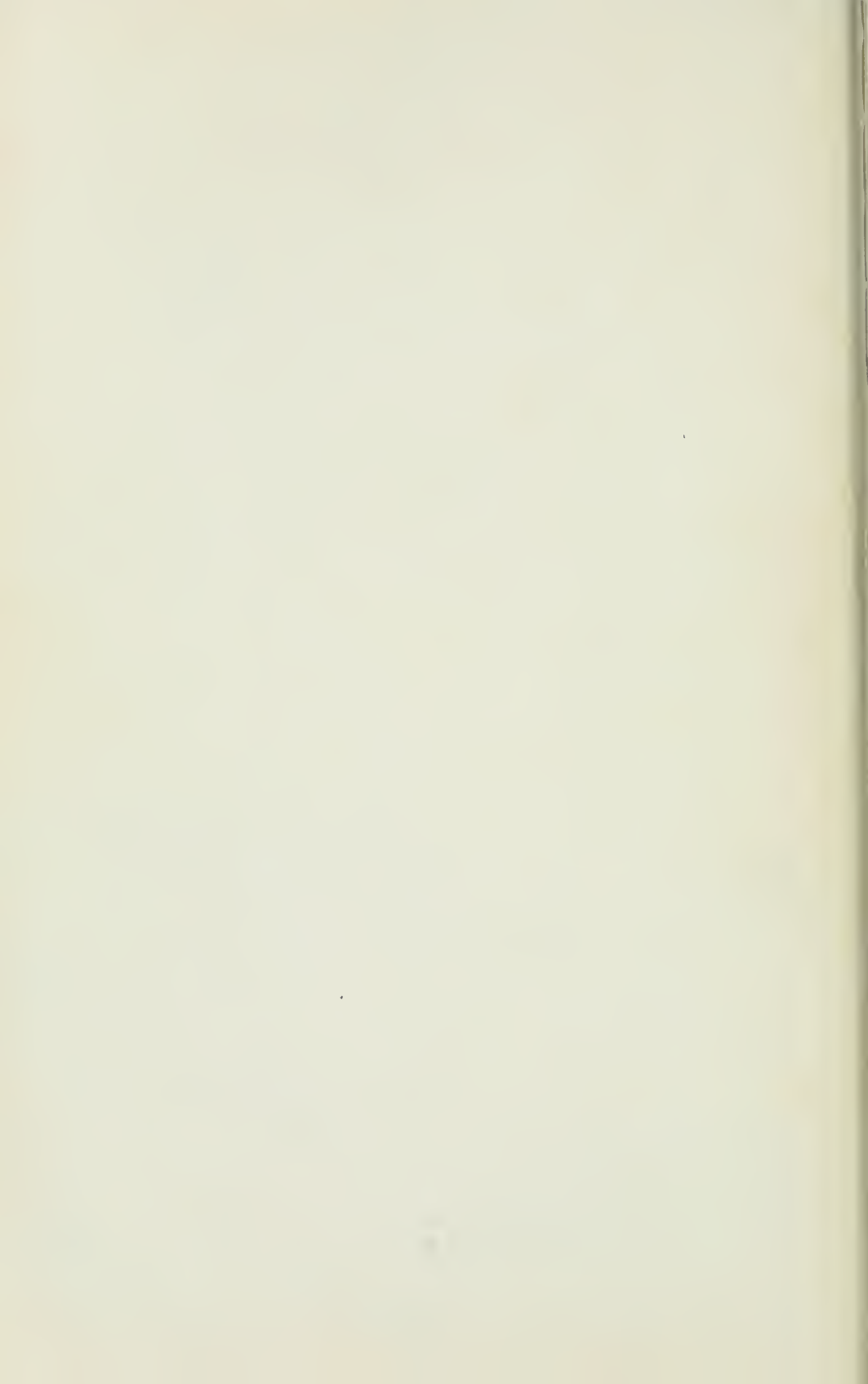


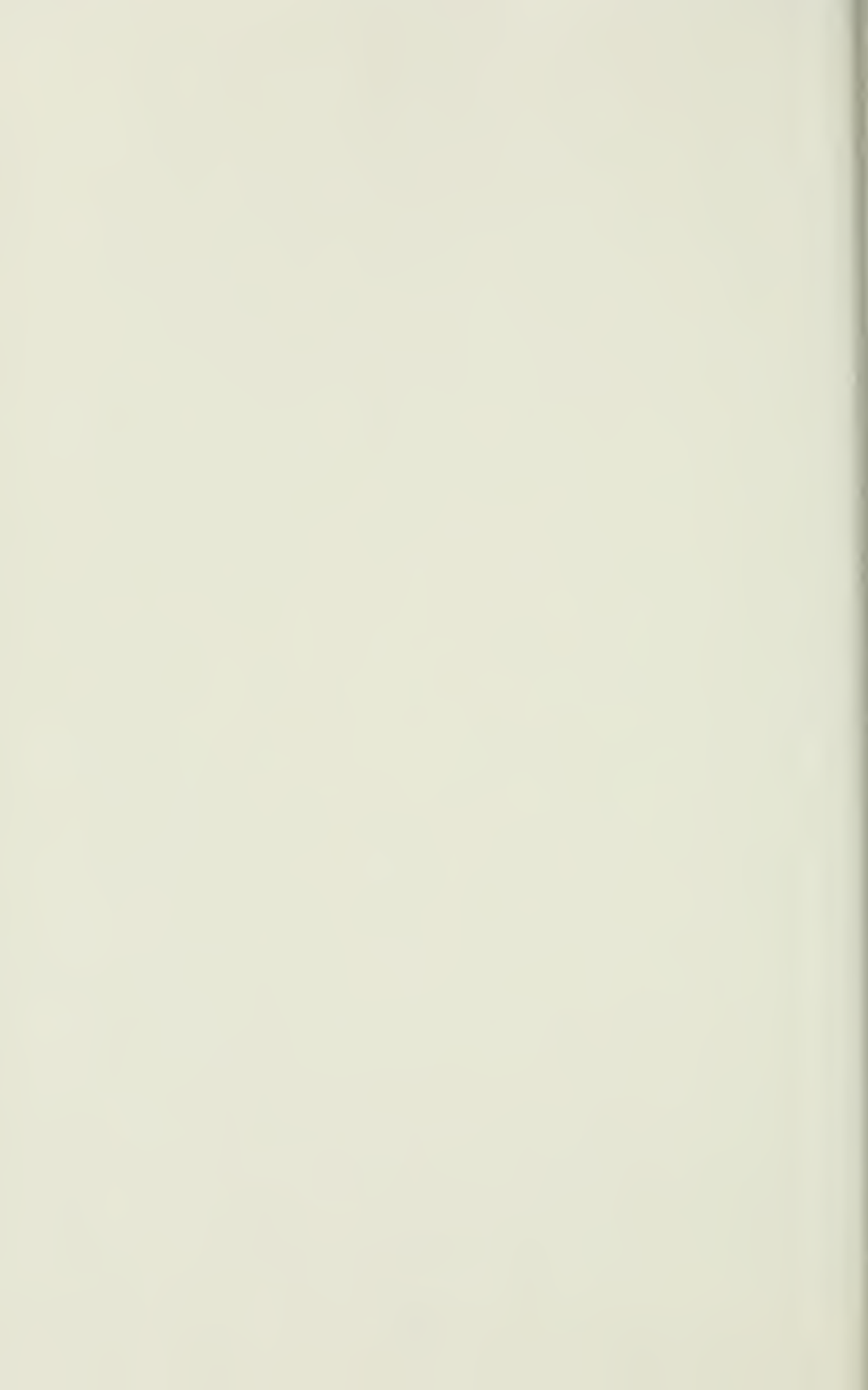
Scene at the warehouse during flood of 1903.



The flood at the ferry landing, 1903.









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I REMEMBER CHESTER, ILL.



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